



February 18, 2024

Representative Mohamud Noor
379 State Office Building
100 Rev Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Noor and Human Services Finance Committee Members:

I write to you in support of the Priority Admissions Task Force recommendations. The challenges related to a lack of access and capacity to state operated services are a result of many factors. Enabling access for individuals to the most appropriate level of care available for their needs must be at the center of solutions that address those challenges. The recommendations brought forward by the task force are a step in the right direction toward expanding access and capacity.

Patients in hospitals who should have a state operated services level of care often require a higher staffing ratio which reduces staffing availability. Their needs may also result in the closure of other beds to keep other patients safe, resulting in reduced bed availability. Individuals waiting in our hospital for these services are people with disabilities and being at an inappropriate level of care is harmful to their wellbeing. Consequently, when patients cannot discharge from the hospital, the Emergency Department (ED) backs up with “boarders” waiting for an inpatient bed. This results in hospitals turning away trauma and other patients in the ED, patients remaining in the ED far longer than appropriate, and patients decompensating mentally and physically in the wrong level of care.

Caring for patients who do not need our care means we cannot care for those who do. Hennepin Healthcare currently has a patient that has been in our psychiatric unit for nearly **600 days** who has assaulted our staff more than 115 times. If this patient was being more appropriately served in St. Peter Regional Treatment Center, our staff would be safer and we could care for numerous additional patients in our unit.

I support the task force’s recommendations that aim to alleviate some of these challenges:

- Immediately begin to increase capacity of Direct Care and Treatment (DCT)
- Approve an exception to the Priority Admissions law for up to ten civilly committed individuals waiting in a hospital to be added to the Priority Admissions waitlist at DCT
- Implement new Priority Admissions criteria to the DCT facilities
- Increase access to services provided in the community
- Expedite Minnesota’s Section 1115 Waiver application for individuals in custody
- Relieve Counties of Certain Does Not Meet Medical Criteria (DNMC) Costs

I appreciate your attention to this urgent issue and ask for your support to help improve the priority admissions process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jennifer DeCubellis', written in a cursive style.

Jennifer DeCubellis
Chief Executive Officer,
Hennepin Healthcare System