



A collaboration among the University of Minnesota,
University of Minnesota Physicians and Fairview Health Services

January 27, 2021

Dear Behavioral Health Policy Division Committee Chair Fischer,

Thank you for your ongoing work to ensure Minnesotans have access to mental health and substance abuse care. M Health Fairview is the largest provider of behavioral health in the Upper Midwest. **Our system currently provides more than 40% of the inpatient mental health beds in Minnesota and is one of few to provide care across the continuum of mental health needs, adolescent to adult and geriatric.**

Our commitment is unwavering, demonstrated by our innovation and proactive action. For example, M Health Fairview expanded services this month at our St. Joseph's campus to introduce Transition Care Services in the existing Mental Health and Addiction Clinic, doubling its capacity. The new services create same-day access to therapeutic and supportive transition care for patients while they await admission to a mental health or addiction program, a period of significant vulnerability for patients. These services are the first of their kind in the Twin Cities, and better meet patients' needs with a supportive, medically-appropriate space.

In March, we'll open the state's first Emergency Psychiatric Assessment, Treatment & Healing (EmPATH) program. EmPATH creates a care environment suitable to urgent mental health needs, while addressing patients' crises with medical and social intervention, immediate psychiatry assessment, and support in shaping an effective, sustainable treatment plan.

We are aware that the transition of St. Joseph's into a community hub of health and wellness has raised questions about the future of the inpatient mental health beds currently in service there. **At this time, we have no plans to close mental health beds located on the St. Joseph's campus.** However, there is a stark financial reality we are facing as we continue to support inpatient services well beyond the needs of our attributed patient population – by as much as 30%. We have issued a formal Request for Partnership, seeking partners in a long-term, sustainable solutions to the inpatient care delivery currently provided at the St. Joseph's campus. Though the pandemic slowed our initial progress, we remain in active search for partners to share in our commitment to mental healthcare and hope other regional health systems may consider joining us.

The outsized role we play in providing mental healthcare in Minnesota is a demonstration of our commitment. However, with this commitment comes unsustainable financial burden. We also strongly believe that inpatient mental health reimbursements, especially for Medicare and Medicaid patients, is nowhere close to covering the costs of these services. Inadequate reimbursement rates for mental healthcare penalize non-profit health systems like ours that offer disproportionate share of mental health services to patients covered by government payor health insurance. Solutions to this imbalance are key to making mental healthcare more widely available and would incentivize other systems to join us in expanding care options.





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To that end, we hope that we can work with you and with our fellow advocates not only to continue to expand the continuum of care options and develop innovative approaches, but also to improve the reimbursement rates for mental health care services. Doing so recognizes that mental health care *is* healthcare. It legitimizes the care patients receive as crucial to their health and helps promote parity. It also means health care systems can focus on innovating new models for mental health care delivery, instead of just “getting by” on the status quo.

This work cannot be M Health Fairview’s alone. We need to share the responsibility of meeting our state’s health needs. We must address the weaknesses in our state’s mental healthcare system. Doing so is only possible with a shared solution. We continue to seek partners and expertise, and hope advocates and other healthcare providers in Minnesota will choose to join us in seeking solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beth Heinz'.

Beth Heinz, MHA, MSW, LICSW
Executive, Mental Health and Addiction Services
M Health Fairview

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Allison Holt'.

Allison Holt, MD
Physician Chief of Mental Health and Addition
Services
M Health Fairview
Assistant Professor, University of Minnesota,
Department of Psychiatry

Cc: Commissioner Jan Malcolm
Commissioner Jodi Harpstead
Hali Kolkind

