

February 17, 2023



Minnesota House Human Services Policy Committee  
State Office Building  
Room 200  
100 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Boulevard.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Fischer and Committee Members:

I write in support of H.F.1198, the family-centered children's mental health bill. As a pediatrician I've cared for children in the Twin Cities for more years than I willingly admit, including the last 30 years at Hennepin Healthcare where I am Chair of Pediatrics.

During the last decade, pediatric emergency department visits for mental health conditions have risen exponentially. Multiple studies show that pediatric patients with mental health conditions who board awaiting care in emergency departments are more likely to leave without treatment, and less likely to receive counseling or psychiatric medications.

This bill ensures children who are stuck boarding in our hospital waiting to transition to a **psychiatric residential treatment facility (PRTF)** can move into the right setting of care for them. Specifically, the **Mental Health Innovation Grant Program** funds solutions for children to receive individualized mental health care for their unique needs, in the community. H.F. 1198 also expands PRTF capacity through start-up funds that allow specialization and licensing of additional PRFT services. Currently, pediatricians watch helplessly and hopelessly as they attempt to support children and families through what may be their most traumatizing experiences, without sufficient resources to meet their urgent and on-going needs.

This legislative proposal also ensures support for whatever it takes for a child to receive treatment or services in the most appropriate community setting through the **Child and Adult Transition to Community** initiative.

There's no debate that hospital boarding has detrimental effects for children and their parents. Furthermore, medical staff incur lasting moral injury in their role as care provider lacking the tools they need to heal. Medical systems expend considerable resources of staff and space which were developed and are needed to serve other medical needs. Anything we can do to prevent hospital boarding for children will better serve our patient population, families, and our community. I urge the swift passage of this critical legislation.

Sincerely,

Dr. Diana Becker Cutts, MD  
Chair of Pediatrics  
Hennepin Healthcare System  
Associate Professor of Pediatrics  
University of Minnesota Medical School