



*Mental Health Minnesota is the voice of lived mental health experience.*

*We carry that declaration forward as we work to advance mental health and well-being for all, increase access to mental health treatment and services, and provide education, resources and support across Minnesota.*

February 21, 2022

Dear Members of the House Health Finance and Policy Committee:

I write today to convey Mental Health Minnesota's opposition to HF3281, which would provide a bed moratorium exception to allow for construction of a new hospital in Ramsey County, with 144 licensed psychiatric beds.

While we agree that there is a significant unmet need for inpatient mental health care in Minnesota, we do not agree with this approach to resolving the crisis.

First, we do not believe that it makes sense to build a stand-alone hospital for those seeking inpatient mental health care that does not include an emergency department. Emergency rooms remain a primary gateway for people experiencing serious mental health symptoms to get into inpatient care.

Second, creating a stand-alone facility that does not provide other medical services will not serve people well who are experiencing mental health crisis or are seeking inpatient mental health care. It is our position that we need health care to care for the whole person, and separating physical and mental health care into separate facilities is simply not reflective of individual reality or the need for a more integrated and collaborative approach to health care.

Finally, federal law prohibits states from using Medicaid to pay for mental health care in psychiatric facilities with more than 16 beds. To open this proposed facility and utilize Medicaid, Minnesota would need to request an IMD Exclusion waiver. Many people in Minnesota who are living with mental health concerns rely on Medicaid to pay for their care, and building a facility without having a direct funding mechanism tied to Medicaid is a significant concern.

Again, we agree that there is a crisis when it comes to access to inpatient mental health beds. However, we believe that this need must be addressed in a way that best serves the people of Minnesota, and that includes an approach that includes an emergency department, reflects both physical and mental health needs, and has the ability to accept Medicaid for patient care.

Thank you. We appreciate the opportunity to convey our opposition to this proposal.

Sincerely,

Shannah C. Mulvihill, MA, CFRE  
Executive Director