



May 9, 2022

Senator Abeler
Senator Utke
Senator Benson
Senator Koran
Senator Hoffman

Rep. Liebling
Rep. Schultz
Rep. Pinto
Rep. Gomez
Rep. Albright

Re: Comments regarding Health and Human Services Omnibus bills (HF 4706/SF 4410)

Dear Members of the Health and Human Services Conference Committee:

On behalf of Hennepin Healthcare, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to help inform your work to create a final health and human services omnibus bill this session. The lasting impacts of the pandemic have had detrimental effects on health care, while also shining a light on the importance of flexibilities that were granted during that time. We are grateful for the strides forward and ask that you reconsider some items that could have a negative impact on patient care.

Support

Mental Health - We appreciate the inclusion of so many investments in both bills in mental health, especially investments in children's mental health, including children's residential treatment services, psychiatric residential treatment facilities and mobile crisis services. These services are crucial in keeping youth out of the hospital to receive appropriate care. The 50% rate increase in Mental Health Adult Day Treatment in both bills corrects rates that have been historically low, making providing this intensive outpatient service difficult to continue. Patients and clients rely on this multidisciplinary program to prevent hospitalization, and support discharge from inpatient services. ***Please accept the House language for Adult Day Treatment.***

Community Health Workers and Universal home visiting - The pandemic resolidified the importance of community health workers and this provision will strengthen their workforce to better address social determinants of health. **Universal home visiting**, included in the House bill, will create opportunities for families to develop and maintain safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments. ***Please accept the House language for both.***

Long COVID research - After Covid-19, many people make a full recovery within weeks; for others, symptoms can last much longer. The funding in the House bill is essential to helping our health systems collaborate in order to explore and use the most effective approaches to treating patients with Long Covid. ***Please accept the House language.***

Background studies – Our current background study process is duplicative and burdensome. **We support the Senate language to exempt individuals licensed by a health-related licensing board from also needing a DHS background study.** In addition, **the House language to delay the requirement for full compliance of background studies** to January 1, 2023 will ensure those who started during the pandemic can continue working without disruption.

Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC) - Establishing Minnesota as a member of the **Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC)** would join us with 39 other states and jurisdictions in the compact, allowing Minnesota nurses to obtain a single license to work in multiple states with the same high standards and safety of current state licensure.

Please accept the Senate language.

Temporary permits – We support the 90-day temporary permit for physicians, physician assistants, and respiratory therapists and extends the current 60-day temporary permit for nurses to 90-days for those dually licensed in another state. Delaying these licensed professionals ability from practicing in Minnesota is an unnecessary detriment to our continued workforce crisis. ***Please accept the Senate language.***

Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptive (LARC) – We support the reimbursement LARC immediately post-partum to be paid outside of the current medical assistance reimbursement for births. Inserting a LARC is an elective procedure, much like a tubal ligation, and should be reimbursed separately, as 43 other state Medicaid programs have determined. ***Please accept the House language.***

Provider Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) – We support a study of issues related to end-of-life care for patients with advanced serious illness, and the need for a state-wide registry for POLST forms to ensure a patient’s wishes are carried out by medical providers. Emergency responders are especially at a disadvantage as they would rarely have access to the paper copy of the patient’s POLST form. ***Please accept the House language.***

Revitalizing the health care workforce – We support the expansions proposed to the Primary Care Rural Residency Training grant, clinical training expansion and rotations, international medical graduates assistance, clinical training for students, and loan forgiveness. As a teaching hospital, we rely on the learners who utilize these programs to grow their education. These investments are greatly needed to ensure our workforce grows and adapts to the changing population. ***Please accept the House language.***

Concerns

Nurse staffing committees - We have serious concerns about the inclusion of HF3242 in the House omnibus bill. At Hennepin County Medical Center, nurses are one important part of a diverse and intertwined multi-disciplinary care team that work together to care for patients. Despite workforce challenges, nurse leaders are working in tandem with charge nurses and bedside nurses to appropriately and safely staff our facility based on our unique needs and situation. ***Please do not accept the staffing committee language.***

Taskforce for Substance use and Maternal health - We were disappointed that a taskforce to develop uniform guidelines for maternal health and substance use was not included. Statewide, there are inconsistencies in how health systems address substance use for moms, and toxicology testing of babies post-birth. We hope you will reconsider this inclusion to address a very complex topic where changes are needed to keep families together.

Finally, we support efforts to allow MN DHS to wind down the Public Health Emergency flexibilities in alignment with the federal government, including allowing continuous coverage for people under 21 on Medicaid, included in the House bill. We implore this conference committee to come to an agreement on a package that reflects the urgent needs we face as a state, especially with a historic surplus.

Sincerely,



Jennifer DeCubellis
Chief Executive Officer
Hennepin Healthcare System