

My name is Allison Harwood, and I am the Director of Health Services at Zumbro Valley Health Center. Zumbro Valley Health Center is a community mental health center serving Southeastern MN. We prioritize our service delivery for publically insured and uninsured individuals with mental health and/or substance use and housing issues, and have been a certified Behavioral Health Home since 2016 – one of the original BHHs in the state.

Behavioral Health Home services are vital in the continuum of mental health services for individuals diagnosed with serious mental illness or emotional disturbance and comorbid chronic health conditions. Individuals in the program are screened for commercial tobacco and substance use, gaps in preventative health care services, gaps in management of chronic health conditions, and needs related to social determinants of health. Individuals are connected to resources and are referred for services to ensure basic needs are met, to reduce gaps in care, to support engagement in services, and to help individuals meet their health and wellness goals. Individuals are provided with person-centered coaching, support, and education to improve their self-efficacy in managing chronic physical and mental health conditions and navigating complex health and social service systems. Individuals experiencing hospitalizations or emergency department visits receive timely care coordination and follow up and are connected to mental health, substance use, and/or crisis services to prevent further readmissions.

Zumbro Valley Health Center supports HF 3737 because we currently make this service available at a financial loss to our organization. Zumbro Valley is budgeted to lose over \$60,000 this year on this program. The BHH rate has been flat since 2016, which does not even cover our staff costs. This leaves program costs, technology, phones, materials, and administrative costs not covered. Every year we discuss if we can keep the program going or sustain enough staff to meet client needs.

We know the model of care works, but we need the payment for BHH to be more reflective of the cost of providing the service. This is more important now than ever as we struggle to meet rapidly growing mental health needs of our communities during this workforce and sustainability crisis. We believe the rate proposal in HF3737 will improve BHH access to more clients each year. A new sustainable payment for BHHs is a major step in keeping providers from continuing to lose money providing this service and being forced to consider closing it. We ask for your support of this bill to strengthen access to this very important piece of our mental health services continuum.

Sincerely,
Allison Harwood
Director of Health Services
Zumbro Valley Health Center

Offices