



Dear Chair Noor and members of the Human Services Finance Committee:

The Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE), a union representing nearly 17,000 state employees including the therapeutic and rehabilitative staff at Community Addiction Recovery Enterprise (CARE) programs at St. Peter and Carlton. We are writing to state our strong opposition to the governor's supplemental budget provisions in H.F. 5280 that would close these programs and the repurpose the St. Peter CARE facility for use by the Forensic Mental Health Program to care for patients who have been civilly committed as mentally ill and dangerous. Closing CARE programs will have significant implications not only on the lives of patients and employees, but on surrounding communities and Minnesota's mental health care system.

Notice of the proposal came as a surprise to all of us and contradicts the previous message from Direct Care and Treatment (DCT) Health Systems CEO Marshall Smith last summer when employees were told that staff would be added and higher quality programming and services would be provided at CARE facilities in Anoka, Fergus Falls, St. Peter and Carlton. This new plan does not align with the goal of improving treatment outcomes, reducing relapses and overdose deaths and avoiding preventable readmissions. Nor does the plan to simply add bed space address existing issues of staff shortages in forensics and other DCT programs.

CARE programs provide critical services to those experiencing substance abuse disorders and co-occurring mental illnesses that require inpatient care. These specialized treatment facilities alleviate the strain placed on jails and community hospitals and ensure that the bed space in our behavior health hospitals and regional treatment centers will be given to patients with the most severe needs. There is also a significant equity concern with recommendation to close CARE Carlton, the sole women-only CARE program in the state. The decision to close these intermediate programs, which is becoming a concerning trend in this administration, will make it harder for Minnesotans to receive quality treatment for substance use disorder.

We need long-term, sustainable investment in Direct Care and Treatment programs. We oppose the governor's proposal to close CARE programs and ask you to do the same. Closing sites and decreasing an already limited number of inpatient substance abuse and mental health beds is not the way to build a mental health system that all Minnesotans deserve.

Sincerely,

Devin Bruce  
MAPE Director of Legislative and Political Affairs