



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.

Dear Members of the Senate Health and Human Services Finance and Policy Committee:

I write today to convey Mental Health Minnesota's support of SF3257, which will provide a bed moratorium exception for 22 new pediatric behavioral health beds at Children's Minnesota.

Communities across the state are experiencing a staggering lack of access to mental health services for kids and teens. In response to this critical need, Children's Minnesota is creating a new, 22-bed pediatric inpatient mental health unit at its St. Paul hospital. With an existing Emergency Department and hundreds of integrated pediatric subspecialists, Children's Minnesota is uniquely positioned to address and meet the needs of the community's most vulnerable.

Mental Health Minnesota provides free, anonymous online mental health screenings on its website. Since the pandemic began, screenings on the website have skyrocketed, with more than 50,000 online mental health screenings completed on Mental Health Minnesota's website between March 2020 and December 2021. Even more alarming: 37% of the online mental health screenings completed during the pandemic were from those under the age of 18.

The number of screenings completed by youth under age 18 has increased faster than adults, with 10,267 completed in 2021 compared to just 1,708 in 2019...a 500% increase. In addition, children and youth under age 18 have been more likely to score in the "severe" range for the symptoms they are experiencing for both anxiety and depression.

The vast majority of these children and youth (65%) have never been diagnosed by a mental health provider or received treatment or support at any time in the past. Given the severity of the symptoms children and youth are reporting through these screenings, it is essential that we ensure access to treatment, services and support that can help them, including adding inpatient beds for those needing a high level of care.

Children's Minnesota already provides integrated behavioral health care in its primary care settings, as well as outpatient services. Creating an inpatient unit is an essential next step in meeting the needs of our youngest citizens in Minnesota, and I urge you to support it.

Thank you for the opportunity to convey support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Shannah C. Mulvihill, MA, CFRE
Executive Director