



November 21, 2016

Edward P. Ehlinger, MD, MPSH
Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Health
P.O. Box 64975
St. Paul, MN 55164-0975

Dear Commissioner Ehlinger,

I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Association of County Health Plans (MACHP) in support of the hospital moratorium exemption request submitted to the Department by PrairieCare.

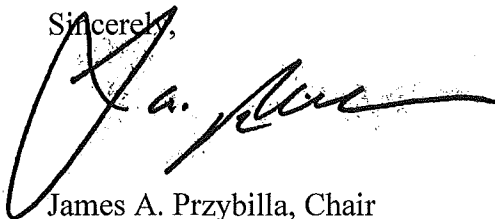
MACHP represents Minnesota's three County-Based Purchasing (CBP) health plans serving 25 rural Minnesota counties and nearly 85,000 Minnesota Health Care Programs enrollees. Our primary interest is ensuring that rural counties have the ability to provide their residents in Minnesota Health Programs with timely access to quality health care.

One of the many challenges rural Minnesota faces is timely access to inpatient mental health services. Minnesota faces a shortage of mental health beds for both children and adults. Mental health patients in crisis that present in Emergency Departments are routinely forced to sit without care while waiting for a hospital bed to open. That bed may be hundreds of miles away from home because local beds are filled with non-area residents.

PrairieCare seeks to add 21 child and adolescent beds to its existing Brooklyn Park hospital. While these beds are in the Metro and our enrollees are in rural Minnesota, we support this application because expanded capacity in the Metro will reduce the number of Metro patients being transferred to rural hospitals and denying local patients the ability to receive care close to home.

We encourage the Department to find that PrairieCare's application is in the public interest.

Sincerely,



James A. Przybilla, Chair

