



03/22/2023

Professional Distinction

Personal Dignity

Patient Advocacy

Senator Melissa Wiklund,
Committee on Health and Human Services
Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Ave W,
St Paul, MN 55103

Dear Chair Wiklund and members:

With 22,000 members, the Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) is the largest voice for professional nursing in the state of Minnesota. We are a leader in both the labor and healthcare communities and a voice for our members on issues relating to the professional, economic and general well-being of nurses and in promoting the health and well-being of the public.

We are writing in support of SF 1174. We believe this bill is a commonsense approach to addressing gaps and shortcomings in the system that harm so many Minnesota children and their families.

By addressing the availability of resources in outpatient, residential, school, and community settings, this bill will create capacity in the system that doesn't currently exist. Those gaps in the system are responsible for long waits for appropriate treatment. As of February 26, 2022, nearly 10,000 people were on waiting lists to access mental health services, according to the Minnesota Association of Community Mental Health Programs. More than half are children.

One of the most frequent concerns raised by MNA nurses is the lack of appropriate services in appropriate settings for children with mental health conditions. A recent study found that 98.9% of pediatric hospital Emergency Departments reported that they boarded youth awaiting inpatient psychiatric care. Children spend days, sometimes weeks or months, in windowless rooms in noisy and chaotic environments where they are unlikely to receive psychiatric care. The condition of children stuck in EDs may deteriorate, and the experience may further traumatize a child and family in crisis. ED nurses, not specialists in pediatric psychiatry, are left to care for these vulnerable patients as best as they can.

SF 1174 addresses gaps in the system for children with mental health needs by:

- expanding the Mental Health Innovation grant to create specialized settings for children with complex needs;
- expanding respite care to include families with children who have recently used the ER, crisis services, or have lost in-home support.
- increasing the number of Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) beds allowed and allows PRTFs to specialize,

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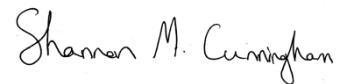


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- expanding extended personal care assistant services to include children boarded in the ER and raises the PCA rate 20% for children with high aggression.

On behalf of the nurses of Minnesota, I thank you for your consideration of SF 1174. We encourage you to think of the needs of children and families who are suffering within our broken mental health system and vote yes for this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shannon M. Cunningham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Shannon M. Cunningham
Director of Governmental and Community Relations
Minnesota Nurses Association