

April 7, 2025

Dear Members of the Capital Investment Committee:

NAMI Minnesota urges you to support HF 2587 which would fund the addition of 50 psychiatric hospital beds at the Anoka Metro Regional Treatment Center (AMRTC) campus. The need for these beds is great.

In 2013, the Priority Admissions Law was implemented that basically required a person who was deemed incompetent to stand trial and was committed due to their mental illness to be admitted to a state operated treatment program within 48-hours. The intent was to move people more quickly from jail to a hospital. In 2013 the Department of Human Services had 43 referrals from jail.

Over the last decade, the number of people deemed incompetent to stand trial and committed due to their mental illness has increased dramatically in Minnesota and across the country. In 2024 the number of referrals from jail grew from 43 to 424. This has resulted in people with mental illnesses being in jails for months if not over a year, and it is no longer possible for someone in a community hospital to be admitted to a state operated treatment program even when the community hospital has had to take beds offline due to the person's symptoms.

The legislature directed a task force to be formed, and then a panel, to look at this issue and develop recommendations. Several of the recommendations did pass last year and involved investments in the community mental health system, a pilot program in jails to provide medication, and increasing the capacity at state operated programs. Language was also added that the 48-hours only kicked in when there was a medically appropriate bed, but this language sunsets this June. These were important changes and investments— but not enough to resolve the problem.

The final report of the Priority Admissions Panel agreed to in February is to continue to the language that requires someone to be moved within 48-hours when a medically appropriate bed is available if there is movement during the next two years on increasing the capacity of state operated programs – specifically adding another 50 psychiatric beds at AMRTC.

NAMI Minnesota is very concerned that if the legislature does not invest in adding beds at AMRTC we will face lawsuits and fines as has happened in other states. We want funding directed to increasing access to care – not fines.

It is critical that we move forward with the well-developed plans to demolish the Miller Building and build a new 50 bed psychiatric hospital. Our mental health system is in crisis and while we must increase access to care so that people do not end up in the criminal justice system in the first place, we must also increase access to this higher level of care to ensure people with mental illnesses are not languishing in jail. While counties want to “hold DHS/DCT accountable” the reality is that there are no open beds. It is up to you to create more beds.

Sincerely,



Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director