



September 22, 2021

Stefan Gildemeister, Director  
Health Economics Program  
Minnesota Department of Health  
PO Box 64882  
St. Paul, MN, 55164

Dr. Gildemeister:

NAMI Minnesota is writing to express our strong support for the proposal from the Regions Health System to add 45 licensed beds, including 5 inpatient psychiatric beds. There is an urgent, unmet need for additional psychiatric hospital beds that requires immediate action. This proposal is an important start that must move forward.

The current inpatient psychiatric bed capacity is inadequate and routinely forces children and adults to board in emergency rooms. When a bed is found, it is often hours a way from friends, family, and other natural supports. This is unacceptable and not typical for any other health condition. When someone has a heart attack they can expect immediate treatment in their community, but people with mental illnesses rarely receive equitable treatment.

When legislation authorizing the Regions addition was heard earlier this year, the public support for adding additional mental health and substance use disorder beds was overwhelming. One mother testified that her fifteen-year-old daughter was unable to access adequate community treatment and needed inpatient care. However, they could only get to an emergency room after contacting the police three times and demonstrating evidence of self-harm. Despite these efforts, it took the mother and the treatment team more than 24 hours to find an open inpatient bed 670 miles away from their home just north of Mankato.

Experiences like this are typical and make it clear that Minnesota's hospital systems are nowhere close to meeting the need for inpatient psychiatric treatment. On behalf of the people living with mental illnesses and their families, NAMI Minnesota urges you to find that the Regions expansion is in the public interest. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Abderholden".

Sue Abderholden, MPH  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Smith".

Sam Smith  
Public Policy Director

