

Testimony
Engrossed Senate Bill 2161 - Department of Human Services
House Human Services Committee
Representative Robin Weisz, Chairman

March 9, 2021

Chairman Weisz and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Pamela Sagness Behavioral Health Division Director for the Department of Human Services (Department). I appear today to provide testimony in support of Engrossed Senate Bill 2161.

The Department supports the development of a mental health registry to improve the ability for the public to locate and access mental health services across the state. Currently, the Department provides this information for addiction programs in the state and this bill would allow the Department to do the same for mental health service providers. A mental health provider registry not only provides improved public access to services, but also provides the opportunity for two-way communication between these programs and state administrators. Having timely and direct communication allows providers to get information and for the state to receive timely feedback about needs or capacity, as seen during the pandemic. Mental health programs would be able to identify their contact information but also specialties. The Department has included a one-time cost as identified in the fiscal note for the registry development which would then be maintained by the Behavioral Health Division.

The Department also supports the development of a behavioral health bed management system. A well implemented bed management system would benefit the state by improving access to inpatient and residential beds for those needing these vital services across the state. Having a line of sight into program capacity also provides the legislature information to inform decisions surrounding state hospital capacity, residential addiction need, identification of services gaps, and more efficient coordination. The implementation of a bed management system

across public and private entities will provide opportunities to improve access for individuals, enhance coordination between providers, and reduce costs to local entities including law enforcement and counties.

This concludes my testimony and I am available to answer any questions.