

Testimony
Senate Bill 2161 - Department of Human Services
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Judy Lee, Chairman

January 18, 2021

Chairman Lee 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 Senate Bill 2161.

The Department supports the development of a mental health registry to improve access for the public to find and access mental health services across the state. Currently, the Department has access to this information for addiction programs in the state. This allows the Department not only to maintain and publish information about these programs to improve public access to services, but also provides the opportunity for two-way communication between these programs and state administrators. Mental health programs would be able to identify not only their contact information but also specialties. The Department has included a one-time cost as identified in the fiscal note, for the development of a mental health registry which would then be maintained by Behavioral Health Division.

The Department also supports the development of a behavioral health bed management system. A well implemented 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, identification of services gaps, and real time 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.