

Department of Human Services
Senate Human Services Committee
Senator Lee, Chair
January 6, 2021

Chairman Lee, and members of the Senate Human Services Committee, I am Rosalie Etherington, Superintendent of the North Dakota State Hospital (NDSH) of the Department of Human Services (Department). I am here on behalf of the Department to support Senate Bill 2084.

We recommend adding the words, 'if below capacity,' to section 25-03.1-20, subsection 3 of section 25-03.1-21, and section 25-03.1-26 of the North Dakota Century Code, to ensure that the hospital can safely meet the individual's needs without jeopardizing patient care or staff safety.

Hospitals use capacity planning methods to balance the availability of beds, staff, and other resources with patient demand. The state hospital has a set number of budgeted beds. We must balance admissions and discharges to stay within this capacity.

North Dakota has expanded community behavioral health services with the express purpose of avoiding hospitalizations. We are also adding hospital beds in the west. These remedies should make it possible, with good coordination of care, for all psychiatric hospitals to remain at or below capacity to ensure that all individuals receive the right service, at the right time, in the right place.

This concludes my testimony, and I am happy to answer any questions. Thank you.