

Testimony
Engrossed Senate Bill No.2081
House Human Services Committee
Representative Ruby Chairman
March 5, 2025

Chairman Ruby, and members of the Human Services Committee, I am Pamela Sagness with the Department of Health and Human Services, Behavioral Health Division. I appear before you in support of Engrossed Senate Bill No. 2081, which was introduced at the request of the Department to amend ND Century Code 50-24.4-29 regarding Geropsychiatric Facilities.

The proposed changes in this Bill align the language to current process. Current language (lines 10-12) requires the North Dakota State Hospital to perform an evaluation of the individual being admitted to a geropsychiatric facility. Removing this language allows for avoidance of unnecessary evaluations by the North Dakota State Hospital. The proposed process (lines 12-14) aligns to improved patient care as an individual may transfer directly to a geropsychiatric facility if evaluated by a qualified provider.

The Department worked with the Long-Term Care Association on the language identified in lines 14-15 to clarify that admissions from the State Hospital will be given first priority.

On lines 19-20 the Department requests to remove the language that prohibits the State Hospital from offering "geropsychiatric services through a unit set up exclusively to provide these services". Although not currently planned, removing this section allows the Department to be responsive to future needs if there is not adequate service available in the private sector.

In 2024, 15.86% of North Dakotans were age 65 and over. According to the World Health Organization, 1 in 6 individuals in the world will be age 60 and over, forecasting a significant increase in need for long-term care options to adequately care for the aging population. Approximately 14.6% of this population has a mental health condition. Due to additional medical conditions related with aging and additional risk factors, geropsychiatric facilities are a necessary component in the continuum of care to adequately serve this population.

This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to try to answer any questions the committee may have. Thank you.