

Senate Committee on Health & Human Services

April 12, 2023

SB 2468: Relating to a study regarding available beds at inpatient mental health facilities providing acute psychiatric treatment.

Written testimony by: Sebastien Laroche, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Methodist Healthcare Ministries

Chair Kolkhorst, Vice Chair Perry, and members of Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input today on Senate Bill 2468 by Senator Eckhardt, which aims to improve mental health care access and outcomes for individuals in Texas by directing the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to study the current and future needs of acute inpatient psychiatric beds. We respectfully offer the following for the Committee's consideration:

- **Assess the Demand for Inpatient and Outpatient Mental Health Services:** Bexar County has experienced one of the largest rates of population growth in the nation, with a nearly 20 percent increase since 2010, yet the availability of inpatient psychiatric beds has been inconsistent and inadequate, resulting in the local mental health authority and behavioral health hospitals to frequently run above capacity for both children and adults. In 2020, Bexar County's Local Mental Health Authority operated at a staggering 120% of its capacity.ⁱ SB 2468 will help Texas better understand the state of the mental health system and identify current and anticipated services necessary to meet demands.
- **Address the Shortage of Mental Health Beds:** The mental health crisis in Bexar County has reached a critical point due to a growing demand for services and lack of community inpatient psychiatric beds. In 2019, the closure of the San Antonio State Hospital's adolescent unit eliminated 40 children and adolescent staffed beds. That same year, the closing of San Antonio's Nix Hospital System took an additional 164 beds offline. Meanwhile, recent data from the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute estimates the need for 227 inpatient beds to address the shortage of mental health resources in the area and meet the anticipated needs of the region. This bill will serve as a valuable tool to make informed decisions about future investments in the mental health system.

RECOMMENDATION: We urge the Committee to support SB 2468, as it is crucial for enhancing mental health care access and outcomes in Texas by providing the State with data needed to alleviate the current mental health crisis. By conducting a study regarding current supply and future need for acute inpatient psychiatric treatment beds, SB 2468 will effectively guide resource allocation, ensuring both adults and children receive necessary and appropriate inpatient and outpatient mental health services.

For additional information, please contact Christine Yanas, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy at (210) 253-3253 or at cyanas@mhmc.org.

ⁱ Bexar County Task Force on Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health (2022). Interim Report on Funding Allocation. <https://www.bexar.org/DocumentCenter/View/33055/Criminal-Justice--Behavioral-Health-Task-Force-Interim-Report>