



Rep. Tom Emmer on Representative Tom Emmer introduces the Securing Facilities for Mental Health Services Act

Broadcast: January 11, 2024 • Duration: 2:40

****COURTNEY GODFREY:**

** In Minnesota, and all across the country, a lack of psychiatric beds is straining the health care system. Emergency rooms are overwhelmed, and families are left with very few options. This week, U.S. Congressman Tom Emmer introduced a bipartisan bill aiming to alleviate the bed shortage by targeting regulatory barriers. FOX 9's Courtney Godfrey explains how it would work and why he has the support of Minnesota health care providers. Behind these doors at St. Cloud Hospital is an innovative way of treating mental health cases. And yet, even here, the lack of psychiatric beds across the state is taking its toll.

****HOSPITAL OFFICIAL:**

** Initially, the empath unit was built to admit 12 patients at a time. And due to staffing, we can operate right now at about six.

****COURTNEY GODFREY:**

** The empath unit is an emergency care model for those with mental health needs. It's one of only two in the state, and has greatly helped relieve strain on the emergency room. But it's not meant for long-term stays. And as hospital leaders explain, they still struggle to find a bed for those patients when it's time for discharge.

****HOSPITAL OFFICIAL:**

** If we can't admit them to one of our spaces, we end up working with our colleagues throughout the state to find a location. And sometimes that means a transition to somewhere that's in the Twin Cities and or Fargo, perhaps, because we don't have capacity here.

****COURTNEY GODFREY:**

** Eighty percent of Minnesota counties have a shortage of mental health care. And nationwide, the National Institutes of Health estimate there's up to 40 percent less beds than needed, an issue Congressman Tom Emmer is taking aim at.

****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** This is really important to my state. It's really important to our country that we start to deal with this crisis.

****COURTNEY GODFREY:**

** This week, Emmer introduced the Securing Facilities for Mental Health Services Act, a bill that, if passed, would allow inpatient psychiatric hospitals to receive mortgage assistance, much like other acute care hospitals do. Essentially, incentivizing providers to develop or expand by making it easier to finance.



****REP. TOM EMMER:**

** In my opinion, this is the beginning. We're building momentum. This is one that has support from providers. It has supports from patient advocates who deal with the problem every day.

****COURTNEY GODFREY:**

** And the bill eliminates a barrier that currently hinders mental health care facilities. The development of the unit here at St. Cloud Hospital, only made possible by charitable trust. Minnesota's leaders say this crisis is going to take all the help they can get.

****MINNESOTA LEADER:**

** Any support for any part of the continuum is helpful for the others.

****COURTNEY GODFREY:**

** Courtney Godfrey, Fox 9. Minnesota's universal free school meals program has led to a big increase.

This transcript was independently produced by MN-06 Watch for accountability and archival purposes.

Source: (January 11, 2024)

Archived: February 06, 2026

Source URL: https://youtu.be/_EujUgU_Jxg

For questions or corrections: mn06watch@gmail.com