



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

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*Chair*  
JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE FINANCING

*Chair*  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON STEERING AND POLICY

October 6, 2025

Senator John C. Velis  
Chair, Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery  
24 Beacon St. Room 513  
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Mindy Domb  
Chair, Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery  
24 Beacon St. Room 33  
Boston, MA 02113

Dear Chair Velis and Chair Domb,

I write in support of my refiled bill before your committee, S.1401, *An Act to provide more timely treatment of inpatient mental health care*. This bill would help protect patients and improve access to inpatient psychiatric care in Massachusetts in several ways.

First, the bill would create a realistic standard for physician coverage at inpatient mental health hospitals. Currently, Massachusetts is a national outlier in requiring these hospitals to have 24-hour physician coverage. The requirement is costly, does not align with actual physician availability, and isn't necessary for patient health and safety. Therefore, this bill would require Department of Mental Health coverage regulations to consider physician availability.

Second, the bill would establish a speedier process for obtaining a second medical opinion as to whether a patient needs psychiatric treatment. Currently, obtaining a second opinion can take weeks. In the meantime, patients remain in psychiatric units *without treatment*, even if providers believe such treatment is vital. Thus, this bill would require patients to request a second opinion within 24 hours of the court appointing their attorney. Once a patient requests a second opinion, the bill would require that opinion to be completed within three business days.

Third, the bill would remedy delays in the treatment process. Currently, after a party petitions the court for a hearing as to whether a physician can treat a patient with antipsychotic medications, patients or their attorneys can ask the court to delay the hearing for up to two weeks. This delay denies patients their much-needed care and can cause lasting harm. This would ***not*** remove the court's ability to schedule the hearing but would instead ensure that hearings occur promptly.

Fourth, for patients in mental health hospitals, this bill would require courts to hold guardianship hearings within seven days of a petition for such hearing. Currently, these hearings can take weeks to schedule. This provision will mainly benefit those who care for older psychiatric patients.

Finally, the bill would direct the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and the Office of the Child Advocate to create an expedited process for administering antipsychotic medication to children in DCF custody. This process would specifically apply to children who need such medication and are hospitalized in inpatient psychiatric hospitals. Currently, this process can take weeks, which harms the children and delays much-needed care.

This bill takes a comprehensive approach to protecting patients and improving access to inpatient psychiatric care. I respectfully request the committee to report the bill favorably. Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cynthia F. Friedman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cindy F. Friedman