

# Sen. Bernier: Announces funding released for mental health beds in Chippewa Valley

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(Madison)... Earlier today, the State Building Commission voted unanimously to release funding for the expansion of mental health treatment beds in the Chippewa Valley. This measure was part of the State Budget the Legislature passed in June, but like all building related projects, also had to be formally approved by the Building Commission.

“I am excited to see this project take another step forward today,” said Sen. Kathy Bernier (R-Lake Hallie). “As I have been saying for several years now, these new beds will play a critical role in addressing the mental health crisis facing our part of the state.”

With funds now approved, the HSHS Western Wisconsin Division, which includes Sacred Heart Hospital and St. Joseph’s Hospital, will be adding 22 new mental health beds for both adolescents and adults. These beds will be an enhancement to their existing units, creating a 33-bed adult unit at HSHS Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire and a dedicated 18 bed adolescent unit at HSHS St. Joseph’s Hospital in Chippewa Falls. With these additional beds, the hospital will be well positioned to better serve the residents of the 29 counties in northern, western and central Wisconsin.

“Ideally, this project would have been completed already but unfortunately, the governor vetoed the provision from the previous budget, adding a two year delay,” continued Sen. Bernier. “To his credit, he recognized the mistake and worked with those involved to finally make this a reality.”

For years, Sen. Bernier has heard from local officials, law enforcement and families about the challenges and stresses of transporting individuals experiencing a mental health crisis from northern and western Wisconsin to the state's only mental health facility near Oshkosh. By improving access to adult and adolescent behavioral health beds in the Chippewa Valley, this project will reduce the strain this long commute places both on patients as well as law enforcement while also enhancing patient recovery by keeping them in closer proximity to their support network of friends and family.

Sen. Bernier concluded, "I would like to thank the leadership team at HSHS who identified the community's need for additional mental health beds and were willing to step up to fill that need along with many of my fellow legislators, in this area and across the state, who recognized what an amazing opportunity this was. These coming beds will be good for our community and great for people in need of treatment."