



Maine Behavioral Healthcare

MaineHealth

Testimony of Jennifer Hunt-MacLearn
Chief Nursing Officer, Spring Harbor Hospital
In Support of LD 1856

Good afternoon, my name is Jennifer Hunt-MacLearn. I'm here to request your help in ensuring that MaineCare rates are adequate to pay the cost of providing services to our patients in need. I've been a psychiatric nurse for nearly 31 years and for the past two and half years I've been the Chief Nursing Officer for Spring Harbor Hospital. Each morning we review the needs for inpatient beds throughout our system. It is not uncommon to have 20-30 behavioral health patients in our emergency departments at any given time, many of which do not have specialized psych ED's. On a daily basis the demand for inpatient adult psychiatric beds exceeds the available beds. This leads to patients languishing in overcrowded ED's. The average length of stay for psychiatric patients in the ED is more than 6 times that of other patients.

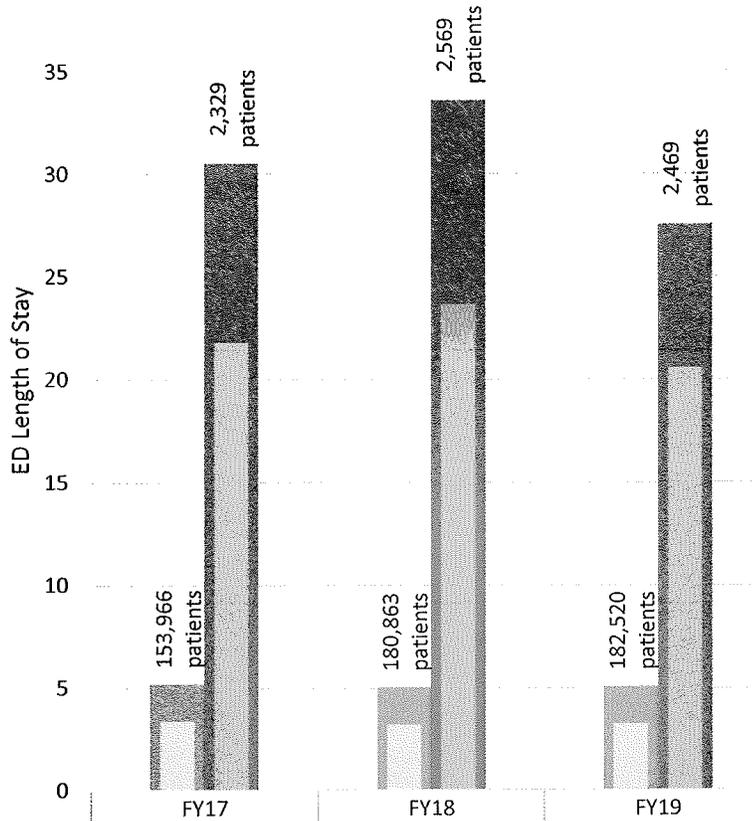
A lack of adequate beds results in treatment delays for some of our most vulnerable citizens who are experiencing acute psychiatric crisis, and these delays may lead to further deterioration without the benefit of a therapeutic environment and clinical programming. Our behavioral health staff is trained and highly skilled in treating mental health conditions and providing a safe, structured environment to promote stabilization so our patients can continue their recovery in the community. I've visited several of our ED's and have seen firsthand patients lying on stretchers in hallways because every available room is filled. I hear our ED and crisis staff vie for the limited beds each day during our bed management huddle. It is frustrating and demoralizing as healthcare professionals that we cannot provide timely access to the high quality, specialized care our patients deserve and desperately need.

Imagine for a moment that you are in an acute psychiatric crisis in the emergency department awaiting an inpatient bed because you cannot be safely treated in an outpatient setting. You are depressed, feeling hopeless and experiencing intrusive thoughts to harm yourself. A sitter or security guard is stationed at your door to monitor your safety while you wait hours, even days for an inpatient bed. The average length of stay for a psychiatric patient in the ED last fiscal year was 27.54 hours as compared to 5 hours for all other ED visits. This is unacceptable, and will be greatly remedied by the addition of the Sanford beds.

As a CNO, it is my responsibility to ensure we provide high quality care while operating within the defined budget. I ask for your support in ensuring MaineCare pays an adequate rate for the Sanford beds; in doing so you will help alleviate the stress on an overwhelmed system and ensure individuals with mental health needs receive timely high quality care.

Thank you for your time, and I would be happy to answer questions.

2019 MaineHealth ED Wait Times for Medical 40 Patients and Psychiatric Patients



	FY17	FY18	FY19
Average All ED Pts	5.178154593	5.005724038	5.045244448
Average Psych Pts	30.50542436	33.59641235	27.54909545
Median All ED Pts	3.37	3.2	3.23
Median Psych Pts	21.82	23.67	20.57