

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR
CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 2541

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: JUNE 23, 2022

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 2541.

This bill establishes a two-year pilot program for certain mental health care facilities to treat additional juvenile patients.

Under the bill, “health care facility” means a health care facility, licensed by the Department of Human Services or by the Department of Health to provide inpatient mental health care treatment and services to adult mental health patients.

Within 90 days following the bill’s effective date, the Departments of Health and Human Services (departments) are to jointly establish a two-year pilot program. The departments are to select between two and four health care facilities to participate in the pilot program.

To be eligible to participate in the pilot program, a health care facility is to: 1) employ at least one licensed psychiatrist who specializes in child or juvenile psychiatry, or at least one licensed psychiatrist with documented specialized training, supervised clinical experience, and demonstrated competence, as it pertains to providing psychiatric care to juveniles; 2) employ nurses who are trained to treat juveniles at all times within the health care facility; 3) employ treatment programs that are appropriate to the age of a juvenile; and 4) be licensed to treat mental health patients in both involuntary psychiatric beds and voluntary psychiatric beds, as those terms are defined in the bill.

For the duration of the pilot program, a health care facility participating in the pilot program is to be permitted to: 1) place juvenile mental health patients in vacant beds that are otherwise reserved for adult mental health patients, whenever feasible and clinically appropriate; and 2) place adult mental health patients, who are legally committed to psychiatric inpatient care, in voluntary psychiatric beds, whenever feasible and clinically appropriate.

The bill provides that the departments are to study the performance of the health care facilities participating in the pilot program and assess the quality of treatment provided to adult and juvenile mental health patients. Within 90 days following the conclusion of the pilot program, the departments are to prepare and jointly submit a report containing all relevant findings to the Governor and Legislature.