



New Hampshire Senate

## News Release

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### **Morse, Bradley urge support for increasing mental health beds, expanded DCYF oversight**

Concord, NH - Today, Senate Majority Leader Jeb Bradley (R-Wolfeboro) offered an amendment to HB 400 which would require the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a 10 year plan for mental health services, expand the number of beds available for mental health patients in addition to providing additional community based services and mobile crisis units. This legislation also makes organizational and policy changes for the Division of Children, Youth and Families [DCYF], as well as strengthening the Child Protection Act.

Senate Majority Leader Jeb Bradley (R-Wolfeboro) and Senate President Chuck Morse (R-Salem) issued the following statements:

"I am pleased to introduce this amendment today which addresses two pressing issues facing New Hampshire, namely the need for greater mental health care services as well as reforms at DCYF. It is our intent to change our laws so we establish a clear policy that values the welfare of a child over family reunification when the parents may endanger their child's safety. This amendment also makes organizational reforms, requires an independent review and provides additional oversight at DCYF to better protect the children from abuse in our state," said Senate Majority Leader Jeb Bradley (R-Wolfeboro).

"In addition to creating a 10 year plan for mental health services, this amendment proposes adding new mental health beds in a way that alleviates the mental health logjam as quickly as we can. We believe this expedited process will relieve the strains on our state's hospitals while providing the care these patients need long-term," said Bradley.

"After receiving daily reports on the number of mental health patients held in emergency rooms awaiting mental health beds to become available at New Hampshire Hospital, and then seeing it first hand during a visit to a local hospital in recent weeks, it became very clear that we could wait no longer to take action to address the shortage of mental health care. Far too many patients in need of psychiatric care are waiting weeks, in some cases, for the care they need in emergency rooms across the State," said Senate President Chuck Morse (R-Salem).

"Mental health has quickly become one of the most pressing issues facing this state. By adding 20 additional traditional mental health care beds and 40 new transitional beds as well as expanded community services, we intend to swiftly address this growing problem of patients waiting far too long for mental health care," added Morse.

"This amendment also draws on the great work and strong leadership of Senator Sharon Carson to restructure DCYF providing greater protections, transparency and oversight by adding an assistant commissioner and strengthening the language in the Child Protection Act. These proposed changes aim to reduce the risks faced by children in New Hampshire by making sure that their best interest is always the top priority," said Bradley. "This legislation would allow for unfounded abuse or neglect reports to be admissible in later court proceedings, which are not allowed today, in order to highlight a pattern should there be one related to abuse."

"I would also like to thank Representative Danielson for his leadership on this legislation throughout the process," said Bradley.

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