

Comment Report

SF 461

A bill for an act relating to the voting members of a governing board of a mental health and disability services region.(Formerly SSB 1158.)

Subcommittee Members: Moore, T.-CH, Bennett, Meyer, A.

Date: 03/22/2021

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: House Lounge 1

Name: Renee Schulte

Comment: Comments for NAMI Iowa ED, Peggy Huppert Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on SF 461. This bill limits the voting rights of members of an MHDS governing board so that only a county supervisor or a supervisors designee would have the authority to vote on budget issues. As you may know, I serve on the Childrens Behavioral Health Board, appointed by Gov. Reynolds. I also served on the previous Board, which made the recommendations that became law two years ago. I distinctly remember the meeting where this issue was discussed. The Board voted to require expansion of the MHDS Boards with representatives from the child welfare system and K12 education to provide muchneeded expertise to a system that previously had only served adults. We specifically discussed the idea of nonelected members voting on budgets being perhaps controversial, and still agreed (and voted) that they should all be full voting members. Legislators then agreed with us and made it part of the law. This bill, therefore, goes counter to the express intent of the Childrens Behavioral Health Board. In addition, part of the goal of expanding the MHDS Boards was to expand health equity and access efforts at the regional level. The vast majority of Iowa county supervisors are white males, but the system serves mostly women and children, many of whom are people of color. We feel they should be represented in decision making. Im not sure where the impetus for this bill came from, but I havent heard of any problems or concerns with new voting members on MHDS Boards causing major upheaval or problems. The fact is, supervisors still hold the majority on all the boards and could still control every vote if they wanted.