

From: Hawes, Emily (she/her)
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2026 1:48 PM
Subject: H.573

Good afternoon Representative Berbeco,

The Department of Mental Health (DMH) has reviewed H.573, which proposes to expand the types of health care professionals that the Commissioner of Mental Health may designate to complete the first certification for an emergency examination. DMH does not support this expansion and is opposed to broadening the existing statutory framework.

From both a clinical and parity perspective, DMH does not support lowering the qualifications required to assess and determine that an individual meets the threshold for involuntary hospitalization. These decisions involve significant clinical judgment (including medical), legal implications, and individual rights, and should remain within the scope of physicians or medical professionals with the same signing and decision-making authority as physicians.

There is no evidence that expanding the pool of eligible certifying professionals will improve timely access to appropriate care. Instead, this approach risks weakening clinical rigor and legal safeguards, while further setting apart individuals with mental health conditions from the standards applied across the broader healthcare system in determining level of care — particularly for emergency evaluations that may result in involuntary admission to an inpatient psychiatric unit.

For these reasons, DMH respectfully urges the committee to reconsider this proposal.

Sincerely,

Emily J. Hawes (she/her)
Commissioner
Vermont Department of Mental Health