



April 9, 2013

Dear Chair Greenlick, Vice Chairs Keny-Guyer and Thompson, and members of the Oregon House Health Care Committee,

Thank you for considering the input of mental health and addiction providers as you decide on HB 2020. We all want our efforts to transform health care to result in accessible, quality services delivered by a well-organized system. Simplifying the credentialing process so that both providers and CCO's can maximize the resources available to serving clients is essential.

Serendipity Center is a nonprofit therapeutic school. We integrate special education with outpatient mental health treatment for children referred to us by 22 school districts in three (and sometimes four) Oregon counties. All of the children who attend Serendipity have exhausted the placement options within their home districts. Many have already been served in other treatment settings. Access to treatment supports at both planned and sudden points of their school days allows them to gain critical skills and continually return their focus to academic and social learning. While many children facing challenges are well served in public schools and traditional treatment settings, our students tend to face multiple and compounding conditions. Poverty (over 81% on free/reduced meals), histories of surviving trauma (61% have experienced abuse, neglect, and/or exposure to violence), tendencies towards physical aggression (over 74%), and co-existing conditions that impact development, such as autism (45%), produce children who need specialized and individualized approaches if they are to achieve their potentials. Their ability to function in school, maximizing their literacy and skills of independence, rests on our ability to deliver a school experience that is designed with a thorough understanding of both their mental health and educational needs.

Serendipity has contracted with Health Share Oregon – Multnomah (formerly Verity) since becoming a certified provider of children's services in 1990. Our compliance audits have been demanding, but have also generated useful support and guidance as we learned to navigate as a managed care provider. Several years ago, we become an out-of-network provider for Health Share Oregon – Clackamas (formerly Clackamas County Mental Health). We have initiated the process of requesting a contractual relationship with Family Care, in order to serve the all possible children in the counties of the school districts that refer them.

This letter supports the proposed amendments to HB 2020 and speaks to the needs of smaller providers. Our staff of 77 employees includes one Treatment Director and only 5 Clinical Case Managers (Qualified Mental Health Professionals), all of whom are needed every day on the floor to provide coaching, counseling, skill-building, and crisis de-escalation. Preparing for and participating in multiple audits would restrict our ability to deliver care when it is most needed. Even more important, the efficiencies proposed by these amendments move our whole system of care towards the kind of cooperation and collaboration that would position the well-being of individuals to be the shared primary concern. Directing money when possible away from administrative requirements and towards impactful services supports providers, the CCO's, and ultimately, children and families.

Thank you again for all you do to create and define this new system of care.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Belinda Marier". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Belinda Marier  
Executive Director