

Memorandum

To: Sen. Laurie Monnes-Anderson, chair, Senate Committee on Health Care
Sen. Alan DeBoer, vice-chair, Senate Committee on Health Care
Member of the Senate Committee on Health Care

From: Laura Etherton, OPCA State and Federal Policy Director

Date: February 7, 2018

Re: Re: Support for SB 1539 - Expansion of the Oregon Psychiatric Access Line to adults

SB 1539 expands the Oregon Psychiatric Access Line (OPAL-K), currently used by primary care providers throughout the state when a child psychiatric consult is needed, to include geriatric and adult patients.

OPCA represents 32 community health centers, also known as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), many of whom expressed appreciation for the existing OPAL-K program and shared examples of how they have used the service when a mental health professional wasn't available or specialized knowledge was needed. We heard from our member health centers in both rural and urban areas who see value in expanding it to their adult populations. Health center members shared the following:

"I have used the Opal K line in the past and found it to be very helpful. I would love to see the service expanded. Access to pediatric psychiatry in this format is an amazing resource to have. In particular, I used this service for a child with severe behavioral problems who was endangering his sibling. At the time he wasn't able to get connected with pediatric psychiatry services locally. I was connected to a pediatric psychiatrist within 20 minutes and they were extremely helpful. I also received a wonderful printed summary that I could put in the patient's chart of the recommendations with additional resources for myself and for the family. The process is easy and works very well." – Oregon coast provider

"We have such a deficit of services and such a need, I truly believe this would be well used. We only have one psychiatrist in our rural area who fields calls from providers in the community. Not only for our patients benefits, our benefit as providers, but also for the single psychiatrist, I think this would provide a valuable resource." – Oregon coast provider

"Our providers use the program often, like it a lot and would LOVE if adults were added." – Portland

Community health centers, who serve over 420,000 Oregonians, including one in every four Medicaid patients, know that providing mental health services as a primary care service (integrated into the primary care visit) leads to better patient outcomes. As our health center member testimonials show, access to a real-time psychiatric consultations for patients has

meant that the primary care provider felt supported and delivered timely and appropriate care for the child.

Expanding the access line to include geriatric and adult psychiatrists ensures every Oregonian has access to high quality, timely care when they need it. Given the success of OPAL-K and provider uptake of the service, expansion of this service to include adult psychiatry consults would be well utilized by our health center members, who serve some of the most vulnerable populations.

We urge your support of SB 1539.

Oregon Primary Care Association
Leading the transformation of care to achieve health equity for all.
www.orpca.org