



Sharon Meieran

Multnomah County Commissioner, District 1

To: Senate Health Care Committee
From: Sharon Meieran, Multnomah County Commissioner
Date: January 28, 2019
Re: Support for Senate Bill 134

Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 134. The intent of this legislation is to improve the quality, consistency, and accessibility of behavioral health care across the state, especially for those most in need.

Last year, my office spearheaded an [analysis](#) of the mental health system in Multnomah County. Among the many findings detailed in the report, one observation stands out prominently:

“The system is highly complex...there are multiple pathways and touchpoints in which service access and service denial occur, **making system navigation difficult, particularly for individuals with limited capacity to meet the various requirements for service engagement**, including individuals who are homeless and those with co-occurring mental health and substance use issues.”

We hear consistently from consumers, providers, and others with lived experience that our current system can be complicated and unpredictable. When people accessing services appraise their experiences as “*like trying to open a locked door* that requires a secret combination, which is different for different types of people;” “*Successful only for those with an inside scoop* about what is available;” and as “*A maze with no route out*,” we need to listen and improve. While we have incredible individuals doing amazing work across our region, these services are less meaningful and effective when people don’t have a clear understanding of how to access them -- this is especially true for people who are vulnerable, in crisis, and often not in a position to advocate for themselves or navigate complex systems on their own.

Senate Bill 134 aims to address this problem by requiring Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) to develop standardized prevention and care “roadmaps” to make treatment systems more transparent and navigable by those who use the systems. This goal is especially important as we set our sights on the next generation of CCOs, and the expectations we collectively share for the kind of care we want people to receive. Multnomah County is committed to improving our local system of behavioral health care in partnership with our regional CCO, and looks forward to working in coalition with stakeholders to achieve the intent of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Meieran