

Submitter: L Lorraine McKenzie M.S.W., L.C.S.W.

On Behalf Of: Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure: HB2455

Chair Nosse and Members of the House Committee of Behavioral Health and Health

March 9, 2023

Chair Nosse and Members of the House Committee of Behavioral Health and Health Care:

This letter concerns House Bill 2455.

I am a licensed clinical social worker who has been working in the mental health field in various capacities for two decades. I am the owner and sole provider at my private practice, serving up to 30 clients per week, 97% of whom qualify for Medicaid. Since starting my private practice, due to concerns re: unfair auditing practices, I have reduced the number of insurance carriers I work with from nine to one.

Currently, excessive and unfair auditing practices on the part of health insurance companies are making our work as social workers extremely difficult. In many cases these practices are driving social workers out of this very important profession, which results in limited access to services for many Oregonians. Especially now, as we are emerging from COVID, people need affordable access to mental health services - exactly the wrong time to be driving care providers out of the field. I have spoken to many practitioners in Oregon who have shared that they are not renewing their contracts out of a very real fear that insurance companies will initiate unjust audits and clawback the money the providers have rightfully earned.

I have spent countless hours pursuing one Community Care Organization (CCO) and one commercial insurer (spending over 14 months with one) and still have not received payment for services provided. And, as I'm sure you know, by virtue of the number of testimonial letters received, I'm not the only one encountering these difficulties. HB 2455 will require each commercial insurer and Community Care Organization (CCO) to provide clear directions to individual mental health providers submitting behavioral health claims, defining exactly what must be included in their documentation to avoid recoupment. This will reduce the overall number of recoupments in audits and ensure adequate provider enrollments in health plans. Our community members do not have adequate access to mental health care as it is.

I urge you to take action on this very important issue. Please ensure that HB 2455 is passed. Oregonians with mental health challenges are already woefully underserved. Thank you for the opportunity to let the Committee know about this important issue. Your support of HB 2455 has the potential to help many thousands of Oregonians state-wide. I hope you will work with us to remedy this situation.

With respect,



Lorraine McKenzie M.S.W., L.C.S.W.