



Newport Mental Health

Hope, Health, and Recovery

Board of Directors:

- Nicki Colosi-Trilling, Chair*
- Madeline Turano, Vice Chair*
- Joseph Arver, Treasurer*
- Hillary Davidson, Secretary*
- Dayna Gladstein, Clerk*
- Barbara J. Audino*
- Tyler Bernadyn*
- Karen Cadwalader*
- Dr. Janice DeFrances*
- Brian Geer*
- Mark Horan*
- Angela McCalla*
- Osasemwinhia Ogboghodo*
- Kendra Toppa*
- A Lavaz Watson*
- Barbara Winkler*

Honorary Member:
Hon. J Clement Cicilline

Emeritus Member:
Hon. Stephen Erickson
Joyce Kirby, Esq.

*Member of National
Council for
Behavioral Health*

*Member of Substance Use &
Mental Health Leadership
Council of Rhode Island*



*Accredited by
The Joint Commission*



March 19, 2024

Letter in Support of House Bill 7624 and Senate Bill 2393


I am writing in support of House Bill No. 7624 and Senate Bill No. 2393 which directs the Office of Healthcare Commissioner to promulgate regulations requiring all commercial and managed care insurers to adopt policies like that of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Rhode Island that prohibits the use of prior authorizations for all outpatient mental health and substance use disorders.

As a provider of community outpatient behavioral health services, we know that timely access to behavioral health services as early as possible in the onset of behavioral health symptoms has the best chance of having a person recover. The sooner that a child with emotional disorders who begins exhibiting anxiety, depression or other behavioral issues receives treatment that greater the chance that they can lead healthy and happy lives. Especially for those that experience trauma, unfettered access to outpatient services and supports to prevent more serious emotional disorders and progression to need for higher levels of care such as impatient hospitalization and/or out of home residential placement is essential.

Almost 50% of Rhode Islanders who are experiencing mental health and/or substance use disorders do not receive the care they need. This percentage is even higher for low income, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and non-English speaking groups. Therapy works, but only if people receive the care they need. Access to outpatient therapy and providing the right dose and duration of outpatient evidenced-based therapy is essential to getting the positive outcomes that Rhode Islanders deserve.

Not only should prior authorization be eliminated as a barrier to care but continuing stay authorizations, high co-pays, and limits on the number of sessions reduce access to needed treatment services. Eliminating barriers and restrictions to outpatient treatment not only promotes good outcomes but is proven to be cost effective by reducing the costly use of higher levels of care, reduces days lost from work.

Thank you for your consideration. Passage of these bills will make Rhode Island a healthier place to live.


James M. Lehane III