




Testimony in Support of House Bill No. **7876** and Senate Bill No. **2612**

I am writing to urge passage of House Bill No. 7876 and it's companion bill Senate Bill 2612 Relating to Insurance – Insurance Coverage for Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders. The proposed amendments contained in this bill are a based-on model mental health parity legislation being adopted across the country as well as the thoughtful work of a wide array of professionals and stakeholders convened by the Mental Health Association of Rhode Island. Under the current legislation, there are no sanctions for not complying with both federal and state mental health parity legislation. In addition, current medical necessity and utilization review criteria are often arbitrary and not based on sound clinical practice. Currently there are no consequences if insurers unreasonably restrict care. Not adopting the amendments contained in this legislation leaves the only remedy to address the rampant violations of mental health parity requirements is to file a federal and state class action suit. Rhode Island is at high risk of this happening if the sensible recommendations contained in this bill are not adopted. Research-based or what are called evidenced practices have evolved considerably over the past decades. What insurers recognize as the generally accepted standards of mental health and substance-use disorder treatment have not changed with what science tells us. This bill moves to increase access to high quality and effective behavioral healthcare, and to place reasonable sanctions on insurers for inappropriately restricting medically necessary care. Thank you for your consideration.

  
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Chief Strategy Officer