

April 16, 2026

S 2687 The Protect Mental Health Act

Dear Chairwoman Murray and members of the Senate Health & Human Services Committee,

My name is Gerald Tarnoff, a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist living and working as a psychiatrist in Rhode Island for almost 36 years. I am writing this letter in support of Senate Bill 2687, The Protect Mental Health Act. During my years working with psychiatric patients, I am aware of the high cost of medical care and have seen psychiatric care being considered less of a priority than other medical fields, unless the psychiatric difficulty becomes an immediate or urgent and life-threatening crisis. Just today, I talked to a patient who I believe desperately needs psychotherapy or perhaps an even higher level of care. However, this patient is very concerned about the significant co-pay the therapy requires and with a limited income understandably feels the need to save money for other medical expenses.

I believe the reality is that appropriate psychiatric care saves money in the long term, including other medical expenses. However, with the current risks to federal money, historic difficulty enforcing federal guidelines for parity, and the uncertainty of sufficient federal or Medicaid support for the state I believe and fear that psychiatric care is most vulnerable to be hurt with any cuts to Medicaid or erosion of the federal parity mandate. I therefore want to express my full support for S 2687 which can provide the psychiatric protection it needs.

I hope this is helpful and I want to express my appreciation to Senators DiMario, Lauria, Gallo, Valverde, Mack, Murray, and Kallman for introducing and sponsoring this bill and the Health & Human Services Committee for your consideration.

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