



CONCERTED CARE GROUP Integrated Wellness Center

Education Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 West Wing
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401 – 1991
Support for Senate Bill 646

February 16, 2021

To Whom it May Concern:

The Concerted Care Group provides integrated outpatient behavioral health care to over 2,000 individuals each year. We are on the front lines of the opioid epidemic and can testify firsthand to the hardships we face in delivering the right care to the people who need it. The ability to employ ADT (trainee) counselors at the same capacity as we employ fully certified counselors makes one of the biggest impacts in our ability to keep our doors open, meet census limit requirements, and assure appropriate services are rendered. All of our counselors of all types receive ongoing supervision and are closely monitored for quality of care. During this time of COVID we have been relieved to see how the acceptance and increase in the use of telehealth has helped us reach patients in ways we never could before. But the absence of allowing trainees access to this same tool is an unnecessary limit.

As essential healthcare providers, substance use disorder (SUD) programs with ADT counselors have remained open during the pandemic, adding telehealth counseling to provide life-saving services. We have learned from experience that telehealth counseling is an essential and successful behavioral health treatment mode of service delivery. Telehealth expands access and flexibility to receive counseling, improves treatment retention and reduces systemic barriers and stigma associated with counseling within brick and mortar facilities – all while increasing patient and community safety through social distancing and quarantine.

The State granted ADTs authority to provide telehealth services on April 6, 2020 for the duration of the PHE, and in accordance with ADT scope of practice and supervision requirements. While many clients will want to return to in-person interactions with counselors and group sessions after the PHE, many will have the need to continue utilizing telehealth. Continued telehealth facilitates patient choice to receive high quality counseling services in an effective and accessible manner that supports continued recovery. Its successful use during the pandemic has demonstrated that there is no reason not to allow our entire counseling workforce and all of our clients to utilize telehealth technology – telehealth must remain as an available service delivery after the PHE ends.



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The Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists' 2019 Annual report states that more than half of all Alcohol and Drug counselor applications; and more than 62% of certificates and licenses issued, were for ADT counselors. MATOD members report that ADT counselors comprise approximately 60% of the total counselor workforce, providing individual counseling, care management and care coordination, under supervision of a Board-approved Counselor Supervisor. ADT counselors are an essential part of the SUD workforce, supporting thousands of patients who might otherwise be without care.

SB 646 will permit ADT counselors to continue to provide telehealth counseling while working for licensed SUD programs, and receiving necessary supervision.

The Concerted Care Group urges a favorable report for Senate Bill 646. Please reach out to me if we can provide further information or support on this critical issue.

Sincere regards,

Anton Kuznetsov

CEO