

OPPOSE SB41 – Mental Health Access Initiative

Dear honorable members of the Senate Finance Committee,
Thank you for your service to our community. I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB41, Health - Mental and Emotional Disorders - Consent (Mental Health Access Initiative). As a parent, it is deeply troubling to see bills such as these that remove parental consent when it comes to any kind of medical care and/or decision making for my child. How would a 12-year-old child ever be able to give informed consent? What tool/barometer will a provider use to decide if a child of this young age can truly consent? How would a child choose a practitioner? Where would these consultations be taking place? In schools? There is no specific language around these concerns. Providing any kind of healthcare in a school setting makes me very uncomfortable as a parent. It is not the school's job to provide preventive medical care to my child, and I view this as gross overreach.

As a parent, I spend a great deal of time researching any kind of clinician for my child's care. A child will not and cannot do that. A child will not be informed enough to ask the proper questions. A child will not fully understand the potential side effects of medications. This bill improperly puts the child's care into the hands of a stranger and gives too much authority to the clinician. Parents know their children best and should be an integral part of their care; they should not be cut out of the process. Although the bill states that a provider "may decide to provide certain information to a certain parent" the reality is that clinicians are incredibly busy and do not have time to do extra work and make extra phone calls, especially if it is not required of them to do so.

This bill also states the following: *"Unless the parent, guardian, or custodian of a minor consents to consultation, diagnosis, or treatment of the minor, the parent, guardian, or custodian is not liable for any costs of the consultation, diagnosis, or treatment of the minor under this section."* This begs the question: who IS paying for this consultation, diagnosis and/or treatment?

Furthermore, it is well known that many medications that treat mental illness can increase risk for suicidal thoughts, among other things. It seems incredibly irresponsible to cut the parent out of this decision-making process. Children of any age should be monitored once prescribed these kinds of medications.

While I am sure this bill is well-intentioned, it will put children at risk. Legislating medicine while simultaneously removing parents from the process is a dangerous practice. Please withdraw this bill. Thank you for hearing my concerns.

Warm Regards,

Jenn Ausiello-Rosenthal
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