



WIN Team LLC

HB 919

Maryland Insurance Commissioner – Specialty Mental Health Services and Payment of Claims –
Enforcement
House Health & Government Operations Committee
February 25, 2021

POSITION: FAVORABLE

I am Alford Laws Jr and I am Chief Executive Officer and owner of WIN Team, LLC. We provide behavioral health services in Baltimore City, Baltimore, Cecil, Harford and Prince Georges Counties. I am submitting this written testimony on HB 919 to urge your support for this bill. Our organization serves approximately 900 youth and adults every year, and we employ 60 individuals. A majority of the patients we serve are publicly funded Medicaid patients.

HB 919 authorizes the Maryland Insurance Commissioner to enforce minimum performance standards for the Administrative Service Organization (ASO) that is responsible for managing care and paying claims for Maryland public behavioral health system. The bill is emergency because immediate action is needed to prevent continued harm that reduces our capacity to treat Maryland residents at a time when the pandemic is driving need higher than ever.

We have been working under the current ASO vendor for over a year. Fixes have not been delivered in the timeframes promised, and critical functions remain absent. The system is not stable and not functioning at the level needed. Optum's current dysfunction is reducing our revenue and increasing our costs. We have already been forced to redirect resources away from treatment because of Optum. ***Without immediate enforcement, our agency faces certain financial catastrophe—we are owed more than a million dollars!***

Our experience with Optum to date is illustrated by the examples below:

- **Basic business revenue tools don't exist:** The ability to run reports, research claims, and reconcile payments—all basic revenue cycle management functions-- are not available in Optum's system. Billing operations which used to be done electronically now require an enormous manual lift for our agency. We've been forced to hire additional billing staff to keep up.
- **Erroneous claims denials:** The limitations and errors in Optum's system mean claims are denied in error constantly. For instance, Optum's system cannot accurately process multiple insurances or changes in client eligibility. All of these claims have denied since August.

- **Customer Service:** Erroneous denials often do not have accurate or actionable denial reasons, requiring our staff to call to Optum customer service for each of these. Optum staff are poorly trained and consistently remit incorrect information, so each phone call lasts about 45-60 minutes and fixes only a handful of claims, if at all. Optum's phone lines are also notorious for disconnecting calls, and not reliably giving issue #s to complaints so they can be tracked or escalated.
- **Reprocessed claims:** The substantial volume of erroneous claims denials, as well as a steady stream of claims paid at the wrong rate, mean that our agency has hundreds of thousands of claims reprocessed 1, 2, 3 and sometimes 10 times. What this means is that instead of managing the billing for an agency that submits 10,000 services in a month, our billing staff are managing a revenue cycle equivalent to an agency 5 times our size.
- **Broken functions:** Optum's claims system is constantly malfunctioning. A few weeks ago, we lost the ability to download information on our service authorizations for 2 weeks. Our entire workflow stalled and backed up. Another example is the search function in Optum's system has been broken since early November, inhibiting our ability to access the entirety of client and claims information we need--causing duplicate records, which in turn, causes more claims denials.
- **Reconciliation:** The absence of basic revenue cycle management tools has rendered the reconciliation of 7 months of estimated payments (from the period when Optum's claims system was entirely non-functional) nearly impossible. Our staff are manually reconciling claims from reports remitted by Optum which do not match the receipts we have received which still yet display different information that their claims processing system. It is these gross errors in the estimated payment reconciliation that has Optum still owing WIN Team a million dollars.

As a provider on the front lines of behavioral health care in Maryland, we urge you to act now to preserve Maryland's treatment capacity and vote a favorable report on HB 919.