



Senate Bill 637 Health and Health Insurance - Behavioral Health Services - Expansion (Behavioral Health System Modernization Act)

Finance Committee

February 23, 2022

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT

Northeast Family Services (NFS) was founded in 2003 by Dr. Peter C. Patch, CEO and President. Dr. Patch is a licensed Applied Behavior Analyst (ABA) in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York and is a licensed Psychologist in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, and Florida. Currently we serve more than 1,000 families through intensive in-home services, and over another 1,000 individuals through office-based services. NFS provides these services in 9 states. Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine, New York, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, and Maryland.

The need for quality mental health services in Maryland has never been higher. According to the Behavioral Health Coalition of Maryland, over 45 percent of Maryland youth aged 12-17 who have depression did not receive any mental health care in the last year. In February 2021, nearly 40% of Marylanders reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, yet nearly a third of those individuals were unable to get needed counseling or therapy. Maryland established two programs to provide high-fidelity wraparound – Targeted Case Management and the 1915(1) program – but they have been underutilized and unsuccessful; reimbursement is low, which discourages provider participation, training in the model is insufficient, and eligibility criteria is unnecessarily strict.

NFS came to Maryland as they saw an opportunity to become a 1915(1)-provider due to the overwhelming need in the state and the underwhelming number of children served. Children and families are being separated due to hospitalization, residential placement, and foster care, instead of 1915(1) providers working in the home to prevent such trauma from occurring. It is important that intensive in-home services are available to Maryland communities to ensure they can thrive with hopes that generational issues within families can be mitigated for the next generation, and families can excel as a unit. In Maryland, there is a staggering need for 1915i services with little to no providers. In turn, the communities and families in Maryland are not able to reap the benefits of intensive in-home mental health services, which is detrimental to the families of the state as well as to the fiscal budget for Maryland.

The demand for behavioral health care is at an all-time high. The enhancements in this bill are needed now more than ever. **Northeast Family Services of Maryland, Inc., urges this committee to pass SB 637.**