

Human Services Committee
SB 408 AAC Mental Health Options For Adult Medicaid Recipients
March 11, 2014
Kristen Tierney

Good afternoon Chairs Senator Gayle Slossberg and Representative Catherine Abercrombie, and members of the Human Services Committee.

My name is Kristen Tierney; I'm a lifelong caregiver of a non-custodial family member. I represent caregivers through my business Turtles & Lemonade.

Today I'm asking for your support of SB 408. I feel it is critical to address the access issues with respect to Medicaid providers in our state. Much testimony last year centered on the lack of qualified professionals to help our loved ones. In 2013 there were 1,912 licensed psychologists in CT and 5,828 licensed clinical social workers. This bill will begin to address this issue by adding psychologists and the essential inclusion of licensed clinical social workers as well.

This bill would add psychologists in private practice to Medicaid as an optional service for recipient's age 21 or older. I'm asking that you add Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) to this bill.

Access and choice are two barriers to care and recovery, each a critical issue facing patients living with mental illnesses and one size does not fit all.

This bill would offer HUSKY C & D recipients choice. Currently LCSWs in private practice are Medicaid providers only for HUSKY A & B. Getting appointments in a clinic often means waiting weeks, not all clinics are conveniently located and not everyone wants to utilize a clinic.

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is enrolling many Medicaid adults who will be accessing mental health services which will provide further barriers without an increase in practitioners.

You have practitioners willing to be Medicaid providers at a time when we need them the most.

I ask you to broaden the scope of the bill to include not just psychologists but LCSWs to provide the access needed for those who seek care.

I also ask you to address the reimbursement issue for Medicaid providers. Current Medicaid rates do not cover the cost of most services provided, including mental health services. When providers cannot accept as many Medicaid clients as they would like to due to inadequate rates, this becomes an additional access issue. Reimbursement rates need to be increased to become more adequate to allow people who have coverage to be able to use that coverage and have their mental health needs met.

Thank you for your consideration of this very important bill.

Kristen Tierney

Fairfield, Connecticut