

# Testimony before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee March 6, 2018

**S.B. No. 384 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH PARITY, DATA REPORTED BY MANAGED CARE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE ALL-PAYER CLAIMS DATABASE.**

Dear Legislators, Constitutional Officers, State Agency heads and Chief Elected Municipal Leaders.

I am here to testify in regards to proposed bill S.B. 384, specifically as it relates to Mental Health parity, which I strongly support.

I am a State of Connecticut Employee with the Judicial Branch. My son, who is 21 years old, is diagnosed with Autism. He was Special Education through the Stamford Public School system and was placed at Lorraine Foster in Hamden until he was 20 Years Old. During this time he was in treatment with Dr. H.\* and Dr. B. Dr. H. was an Anthem Blue Cross Provider who after 1 year dropped Anthem as Anthem was late to pay invoices and he stated he spent hours a week on the phone with them so my family and I paid for my son's treatment out-of-pocket.

Due to the costs we sent our son to the Community Health Center in Stamford which is also an Anthem Blue Cross Provider. We were quickly told that he needed a higher level of care such as the Seed Center which works with Autistic children and Adults. I contacted Anthem Blue Cross and asked to do a single payer agreement with the Seed Center as we could not afford the costs. We provided letters and clinical information from Community Health Center to Anthem.

We were told, and I have documentation, that they would review our request with 30 days and get back to us and they never did. In talking with Anthem, they stated that if they could not provide a behavioral provider within 30 miles they would contract with a non-Anthem provider. They provided us with three names of providers. They were:

- Dr. S. of Nyack NY - I called Dr. S. and she does not do diagnostic testing or evaluation for autism.
- Dr. F. of Huntington NY - she is 58.9 miles one way which is out of the 30 miles radius.
- Dr. W. of Scarsdale NY - who does not work with autistic (ASD) individuals.

Anthem, in the documentation we provided, will state that Community Health center never returned their calls and that simply is not true. I talked at length with my son's provider and they did leave many messages. Anthem will state that we contacted on our own other Anthem providers which we did as we were looking to get our son help.

Anthem will also state that they do comply with the Mental Health Parity and addiction Equity Act. In my opinion they absolutely do not comply, and we filed a complaint with the United States Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The Anthem Provider Handbook is not especially helpful or based on current reality. At my son's clinic the provider handbook has all the behavioral health providers listed for Stamford but in reality, there are only 2; the rest are at other clinics throughout the state. They pack their handbook with doctors who are not in the area.

I started this process in January 2018 and as of today our son is still not in treatment. Anthem finally agreed to the Seed Center but what they did was only allow 4 hours of diagnostic time. The Seed Center asked for up to 20 hours. Anthem stated that the Seed Center would have to complete a form asking for more hours, but the Seed Center stated that they can't complete the form until they evaluate our son.

I also want to mention that our 14-year-old daughter suffers from extreme anxiety and she is meeting with a psychologist who thankfully is in-network. The decision was made that she needed help with medication. Again using the Anthem Provider Handbook, we reached out to Dr. K. in Stamford and left 2 dozen messages with no return call. We were forced to use an out-of-network provider for medical needs.

There is a huge disparity between the medical health providers and behavioral health providers in Stamford. The access of care is limited.

In closing, there is a huge gap in medical and behavioral health care. With Autistic children and young adults evidence-based research has shown that these individuals are better treated in the community that they reside. Anthem has completely failed out son and I am sure many other sons and daughters out there. Because our son needs help now we are giving the Seed Center a check for \$5,000 to cover the costs and then fight to get reimbursed by Anthem Blue Cross.

Please pass proposed bill S.B. 384 Thank you for this opportunity to speak and share my experience with you about what this would mean to me/my loved one and people I care about!

Thank you,

Jon Gordon

**\*NOTE: Names of the Doctors have been redacted.**