



Community Health and Counseling Services
Home Health, Hospice and Mental Health Services

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March 17, 2023

Senator Baldacci, Representative Meyer and distinguished members of the Health and Human Services Committee, my name is Dale Hamilton and I am the executive director of Community Health and Counseling Services (CHCS). I am writing in support of LD 445, Resolve, Directing the Department of Health and Human Services to Apply for a Waiver from the Federal Government for the Medicaid Limitation on Payment to a Facility with More Than 16 Inpatient Beds for Psychiatric Treatment.

You will hear compelling testimony for and against this bill. I think it is important to enter this discussion by knowing that stakeholders share the opinion that the right service, at the right time, needs to be available for individuals seeking services to address brain disorder illnesses. This bill takes an important step to improve access to inpatient psychiatric care for individuals who are seeking this level of care.

We must acknowledge the valid concerns that you will hear regarding involuntary commitment. It is understandable that a bill that seemingly expands inpatient beds could be construed as a movement back to institutionalization. I would share that concern if we had ample resources to provide this level of care when it is needed. The unfortunate reality is that many people who are seeking this level of care literally sit in emergency departments for days, weeks and months. Other individuals endure the negative effects of the illness in isolation and others become a risk to themselves or others. Inpatient psychiatric care is not tantamount to institutionalization or involuntary commitment. It is an essential part of the healthcare system and we should eliminate barriers that prevent this resource from being available.

I think it is important for our system to protect individual rights and continue to build on the successes we have made to support community-based services. To that end, I believe that this bill provides opportunities for both things to occur. I believe that this bill can be supported while also supporting concerns that may surface regarding involuntary commitment. In short, halting the development of a much-needed resource because of what might happen, is harmful to all. Moving this forward, while also providing an opportunity for continued discussion on how we will monitor access and utilization, provides an opportunity for the voices of all stakeholders to be respected and acknowledged.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my thoughts about this bill.

Sincerely,
Dale Hamilton

Dale Hamilton
Executive Director