

April 10, 2023

Senator Donna Bailey
Representative Anne Perry
Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services
State House
Augusta ME 04332

Re: LD 1304 Resolve, to Establish the Task Force to Study Barriers to Achieving Behavioral Health Integration and Parity

Dear Representative Perry and Senator Bailey, and Representatives Brennan, Dhalac, and Madigan:

Psychology Specialists of Maine, LLC, is the largest and the only private outpatient behavioral health group practice in Maine that exclusively employs doctoral level (Ph.D./Psy.D.) clinical psychologists and trains postdoctoral fellows. Our group consists of 34 psychologists and we are and expanding to include psychiatry (MD/DO) to accommodate the mental health needs of Maine residents.

We are in support of this critical emergency legislation to establish a task force to study service barriers to behavioral health treatment in Maine. At a time when there is a serious shortage of mental health providers across the state, on the heels of a national pandemic, we have an unprecedented shortage of BH services for every sector of the population, from school children to the elderly.

As founder and CEO of Psychology Specialists of Maine, I have engaged in national and local conversations about insurance roadblocks to behavioral health treatment. In my discussions with senior provider network representatives, it is clear they possess limited knowledge about the scientific research demonstrating efficacy of psychotherapy as well as the cost-savings provided by increasing BH access to address mental health issues and prevent more costly mental health and medical problems. Payors focus on financial benefits and overall cost, not on the mental health and wellbeing of their subscribers. However, they are responsive to data and would benefit from education and communicating with leaders in the BH field. We also see consistently high deductibles for out of network services which prevent some individuals from receiving the specialized care they need. Finally, many providers have left insurance panels due to poor service and nonpayment, with little recourse for their independent practices. Despite the obstacles, we recently had a positive experience with several payors who agreed to substantial increases in reimbursement for psychiatric services as a way to support our mission to build an insurance based psychiatric group in Maine. Moreover, one insurance company set up meetings between our group and two large medical practices in Maine as a way to encourage collaboration and increase access to mental health treatment. It is clear that payors

are in a critical position to support and connect leaders in behavioral health to make meaningful changes to increase access to care.

We are asking for your support to develop this task force to identify additional barriers that private and public insurance providers place on BH treatment services. Only by understanding these roadblocks in our insurance system can we improve access, encourage integration with primary care, and streamline our state's ability to provide BH treatment to people of all ages.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Quimby, Ph.D.

Founder/ CEO, Psychology Specialists of Maine

drquimby@psychologyspecialistsme.com

207-607-4022