



House Health Policy  
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Committee Chairwoman Kahle and members of the Michigan House of Representatives Health Policy Committee, thank you for hearing our testimony today on HB 4925. The Autism Alliance of Michigan is here today in support of this bill - which will amend public mental health care management in Michigan.

We appreciate the bi-partisan bill sponsorship, the hard work of the health appropriations committee chair and vice chairs on this legislation and their historic and continued partnership to bring about positive change to public health in Michigan.

The Autism Alliance of Michigan recognizes three key elements to this bill - increased accountability, the formation of the Behavioral Health Oversight Council and - critical to the autism community - addressing the moderately affected.

First off, creating a structure that places accountability - throughout the public mental health delivery system - squarely on a single entity with structured and defined oversight is important for mental health in Michigan.

We also applaud the creation of a Behavioral Health Advisory Council. The structure of this entity, its responsibilities and collective impact it could have on mental health service delivery in our state was thoughtfully created. This is demonstrated in the balanced geographic representation, representation of persons receiving care, representation by MDHHS, mental health service organizations and the newly-created management ASO creates a coalesced policy making body that has the potential to - for the first time - truly take a statewide view at the delivery of mental health services in Michigan. Moreover, that such a body will have an annual responsibility to monitor and request changes to mental health services in our state. Such a responsibility that we recognize as important in the autism community and identify as "continuous improvement."

The idea of continuous improvement is not a new idea and certainly not a foreign concept to our mental health community. Our Community Mental Health organizations have been on the front lines of delivering service for years - and making adjustments to that delivery to best serve their particular population. What the creation of the BHAC does is bring that discussion and examination of those improvements to a state policy making level - and engages state policy makers in an official and structured format. This will allow for a pipeline and state level policy making structure that is fed from our CMH's ground-level expertise in a variety of populations, with a variety of needs.

Finally, the ability for this proposed structure to address the moderately affected is critical. It is critical to the autism community and to mental health in all of our communities. Just as we seek to see continuous improvement in the mental health system, our Michigan citizens are entitled to the opportunity for their own continuous improvement - wherever they start in the health care system. This is achieved both through the responsibilities directed to the "Administrative Services Organization" (ASO) and with the oversight by both the Health and Human Services Department and the newly-created Behavioral Health Advisory Council., Specifically, that the ASO will be responsible for:

- Eligibility
- Utilization management
- Intensive care management
- Quality management and customer service
- Development of the provider network
- Clinical management services
- Most importantly - the coordination of medical and behavioral health services

This coordination is important to the autism community - where some of our members need Applied Behavioral Analysis - a mental health service - whereas others need speech therapy, cognitive behavior therapy or occupational therapy - physical health services. And then many will have needs either concurrently or throughout their lives need different therapies that cross over and back and forth between mental and physical health.

The oversight of MDHHS for the ASO and the oversight of the BHAC clinical and consumer committees for performance is critical to make sure this coordination happens.

Again the three critical components for the Autism Alliance are the accountability, the creation of the Behavioral Advisory Council and the ability of this new structure to better serve the moderately affected. Thank you for your time today. We will gladly follow up on questions from committee members.