

Attn: House Public Health Care & Human Services Committee

I write in support of HB20-1113, which will be heard today by the committee.

As a licensed clinical psychologist and nonprofit mental health leader in Denver, I am too familiar with the lack of access issues for behavioral health that exist in our metro area and across our state. The stigma around mental health remains significant and serves as an obstacle to many people accessing services when they need it and hinders those who want to help from stepping up to support loved ones. Together with other barriers, such as transportation, time, language, mobility, child care, we are not accessing the care we need to foster healthy lives and communities. Instead, we are allowing intergenerational trauma and maladaptive coping mechanisms to go untreated, worsening health outcomes and access to opportunity to improve life circumstances.

Access to information about available, affordable, accessible mental health resources and training should not be another obstacle. At a time when access to most information is close at our fingertips, it is embarrassing that people cannot readily access information that may improve or even save their lives. I am often networking with community members and other service professionals who have never heard of some of the affordable, accessible behavioral health care options I share. When we host tables at community events I will speak with community members who learn about such services and convey an incredible sense of relief, for themselves or a loved one they don't know how to help. Personally, I am still learning the available option after 7 years of residence and professional experience in mental health in Colorado.

We are in a crisis of communication and access. Anything we can do to put the information at the hands of people who can help themselves and their loved ones, should not be a question. Anything we can do to educate each individual in our community about how they can help the person next to them, should not be a question. Anything we can do so that all service providers and medical personnel are educated about how behavioral health issues intersect their roles and how best to respond, should not be a question.

I support this bill as it is well considered and attainable and see it as taking us much closer to bolstering and empowering our communities to be proactive around behavioral health. Those of us doing this work are busy doing the work; we need help getting the word out.

Thank you for attention,

Sandy Mann