



June 5, 2020

Dear Representative Kennedy and Members of the Committee:

At this moment in Colorado, it is more critical than ever that we rally to our communities' needs. The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is unlike anything we have seen. The growing need for behavioral health supports by members of our community impacted by health challenges, job loss, family or personal trauma, or other trials cannot be overstated in this time.

This bill, HB1411, if passed, will bring much needed relief, as it is crafted to target the areas of the behavioral health system that are strained to the breaking point during this time. I would like to highlight just a few of the important elements of this bill.

The Colorado Crisis Hotline, which receives an average of 20,000 calls per month, has seen an average of 30% more calls. At the same time, the Hotline's team of tireless professionals are relocated to their homes to continue their work, where the intensity of calls, texts, and chats seem endless. We need to provide funding to expand the capacity of the Hotline and provide support to this front-line care team, intervening, supporting, and directing Coloradans to the care they need.

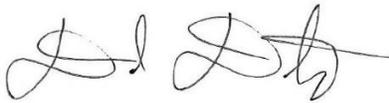
Further, crisis behavioral health mobile response teams, walk-in centers, crisis stabilization programs, and respite services have confronted the complexity of keeping services available, scaled, and safe. Community Mental Health Centers and other crisis providers offering these services, as they always do in times of challenge, have stepped up and ramped up delivery, creatively keeping services available. We need to ensure that they have the equipment, facility supports, staffing, training, and other resources that they need now. They go to work every day, and we need to be there to aid them in their effort to help Coloradans who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis right now.

This legislation also makes important considerations for rural supports. It is extremely important to ensure that no one is left out in this state. This legislation seeks to direct targeted funding to rural communities for behavioral health.

One final area to highlight in this bill is the commitment to substance use disorder and mental health services, seeking to ensure that recovery services and residential care, among other services, have the equipment, staff, support, wrap-around services, and other needs to meet the complexity of demand. Substance use providers and Community Mental Health Centers remain committed to bringing care to the people of their communities, and these focused funds intend to support providers with what they need. Additionally, there is a strategic emphasis to expanding and embedding screening and brief interventions services in more health practices to focus on reaching the maximum number of Coloradans at the earliest stage of need, to achieve the best possible long-term outcomes.

The sponsors of this legislation, Rep Kraft-Tharp, Rep Michaelson-Jenet, Sen. Pettersen, acted swiftly to create solutions to answer the behavioral health needs unique to Colorado right now. I hope this committee will similarly act and advance this legislation in this time of need.

Sincerely,



Daniel Darting

CEO, Signal Behavioral Health Network

Submitted in partnership with:

- The Colorado Providers Association (COPA)
- The Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC)