



**Oregon
Family Support
Network**

February 17, 2021

Co-Chairs Sanchez, Moore-Green, and Nosse;
Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health

As a parent, I wholeheartedly support HB 3046, and as Executive Director of Oregon Family Support Network, include our organization's support as well.

I have personally experienced, and witnessed other families experience the devastating impacts associated with the lack of mental health treatment services, including access to appropriate services in real time; continuity of care across service systems; and insurance coverage for those services regardless of the type of insurance one has.

Sadly, the greatest impacts today without MH Parity can be seen and heard in the stories and experiences of families, including those who are here today.

As a parent, I can say how heartbreaking it is to hear the words of so many professionals who tried to support us in our pursuit of mental health treatments and support. One of the statements that sticks out in my mind is – 'Your child will not be able to access the MH services she needs until things get worse – 'a lot worse.'

My child was suffering, and I could not access the kind of services that were desperately needed. At one point, we were told that my daughter was the perfect candidate for Wraparound Services, but it was 'too bad that she did not qualify'.

I would later learn that she didn't qualify because we were commercially insured. I also would not be able to purchase these services if I had the money to do so either. This is just one result of the lack of Mental Health Parity. It would probably be no surprise to anyone here, that my daughter did get worse. We came close to losing her from suicide. We are so thankful that this did not happen – but the voice of professionals who earlier said – 'things will have to get a lot worse' were right. Now we were able to access a range of services and supports that nobody cared to help us with before.

As the Executive Director of the Oregon Family Support Network, we talk to many families – 'loving parents' who feel they have no choice but to wait until 'things get a lot worse' with their child.

Many parents become exhausted, trying to hold things together, and try to broker services on their own, however run into issues that any of us would find unacceptable. Who here would

feel okay turning to DHS to care for our child because it is the only way to get services for your child? I also had to do this to get help for my daughter.

Families raising a child experiencing serious mental health challenges, go to all kinds of lengths to get their child help. Sadly, without MH Parity, parents and their kids will continue lose hope and take drastic measures to get their child support and services. They will continue to experience strained relationships that result in divorce, separation, and they will live with the guilt surrounded with having to make such choices, and for not being able to keep things from 'getting worse to begin with.

However, this is not an issue that parents and families are responsible for. Our systems have failed them – and have done so completely. The failure of our systems to treat serious mental and behavioral health conditions on par with serious physical health illness and disease continues to break our kids and families every single day.

By supporting HB 3046 the Legislature has an opportunity to stop this endless suffering, by voting for something better. Having mental health parity is an important step in getting to what is 'better' for children and families, as well as all Oregonians.

Please let Oregonians know that you believe there is a better way to cover mental and behavioral health services – Vote YES on HB 3046!

Sincerely,

Sandy Bumpus

Sandy Bumpus, Executive Director
Oregon Family Support Network