



CHILDREN'S HEALTH *alliance*

DATE: February 11, 2025

TO: The Honorable Rob Nosse, Chair  
House Committee on House Behavioral Health and Health Care

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SUBJECT: Statement in Support of HB 2041 Behavioral Health Parity

Chair Nosse and members of the committee, the Children's Health Alliance supports HB 2041, which requires insurers to pay mental health professionals at the same rate as physicians and other physical health professionals for the same services.

The Children's Health Alliance 180+ pediatricians care for approximately 190,000 children and their families in the Portland metro area and Salem and are committed to improving the health of all Oregon's children. More than half of our patient-centered primary care homes provide integrated behavioral health services to support the health of their young patients. The addition of behavioral health services to their primary care home has been transformational.

As mental health challenges among children and adolescents continue to rise, it is essential that we recognize the critical role of behavioral health within primary care settings. According to the 2021 Protecting Youth Mental Health: U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory, nearly 1 in 5 children in the U.S. have a reported mental, emotional, developmental or behavioral disorder, yet less than half of them receive the care they need.<sup>1</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated this crisis, showing a significant increase in mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, and behavioral issues, among youth.<sup>1</sup>



Integrating behavioral health services into primary care is crucial for early identification and treatment, offering children and their families accessible, timely, and comprehensive care. Primary care settings serve as the first point of contact for families seeking health services, and when behavioral health providers are integrated into these environments, they can address mental health concerns proactively and efficiently, often preventing more severe issues down the road.

However, access to these vital services is limited when there is a disparity in payment rates between behavioral health providers and physical health providers. Parity in payment ensures that behavioral health professionals can be fairly compensated, allowing them to remain within the primary care setting, where they are most needed. This access is especially crucial in underserved communities, where families may not have the resources or ability to seek out specialized mental health care elsewhere. By ensuring parity in payment, we are not only supporting the well-being of children and adolescents but also providing families with the comprehensive care they deserve in a setting they trust.

Most payments to health providers from health insurers are based upon the Resource-Based Relative Value Scale (RBRVS). These rates are intended to reflect the resource cost for providing the services. This value is multiplied by a conversion factor to determine the total amount paid for the services rendered. Payments made to behavior and mental health professionals have specific codes for their services, and the RBRVS amount reflects the value for the provision of the services. Currently, many insurers discount the conversion factor paid to behavioral health professionals under the same contract with an independent practice even though the RBRVS value already reflects a lower relative payment for their services. HB 2041 seeks to eliminate this disparity.

We urge you to support HB 2041.

<sup>1</sup>Office of the Surgeon General. Protecting Youth Mental Health: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; December 2021. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>. Accessed February 9, 2025.