

Submitter: Ryan Hassan
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2041

To the members of the Oregon House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,

I strongly support HB2041 and urge you to pass this bill. Despite spending more on healthcare than any other country in the world (\$4 trillion annually), we have some of the worst health outcomes, with shorter life expectancies and higher rates of chronic diseases, infant and maternal mortality, injury, homicide, suicide, anxiety, and depression. Among the many reasons for this is a woefully inadequate primary healthcare system; a system I navigate every day as a practicing outpatient pediatrician.

These failings are largely because our neoliberal economic model has prioritized lucrative health interventions that generate income for hospitals and pharmaceutical companies, such as emergency medicine, surgeries, hospital stays, and chronic disease treatment, and we allow short-sighted, profit-driven insurance companies to dictate what healthcare services patients have access to. The result is that we spend huge amounts of money managing diseases that we could have prevented altogether with proper preventive care.

It is time we start correcting this failure and keeping people healthy. That means funding comprehensive preventive healthcare services, which necessarily includes integrated mental healthcare. Mental health and physical health are thoroughly intertwined, and cannot be separated as distinct entities to be treated separately or under different models. Every single illness originating in psychology has effects on the body, and every single illness originating in the body has effects on psychology. When we fail to adequately treat our patients' mental wellness, we put them at increased risk for acute and chronic diseases of the mind and body. No where is this clearer than in pediatric medicine, where I care for patients as they grow from babies to adults and can see firsthand how our inability to provide adequate medical care for those who need it leads directly to worsening health outcomes over the years. The last three decades of research on Adverse Childhood Experiences, the Toxic Stress response in the developing brain, and the importance of Early Relational Health provides irrefutable evidence that appropriate mental healthcare is one of the leading determinants of long-term health outcomes.

Though there are many barriers to adequate preventive mental healthcare, just as there are many barriers to health equity more broadly, HB2041 will go a long way

towards improving access to mental healthcare by making it much more financially viable for outpatient clinics like mine to provide integrative behavioral healthcare for our patients. Insurer's ongoing refusal to adequately compensate mental health providers for the lifesaving work they do makes it difficult or impossible for many clinics to offer mental health services even when demand for those services is high. This is an inexcusable failure due exclusively to insurers prioritizing corporate interests over patient health outcomes.

Please help clinics like mine do the best we can for our patients and pass HB2041 so that we can be fairly compensated for providing mental health services.

Ryan Hassan MD MPH