

Submitter: Christine Reeh
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2029
March 8, 2025

Chair Nosse and Members of the House Committee of Behavioral Health and Health Care:

My name is Christine Reeh. I am a licensed clinical social worker providing mental health therapy to Oregonians residing in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties. I have been in practice for 25 years, serving 30 clients per week, currently many of whom are healthcare workers with stress and trauma brought on or exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and its after-effects on our healthcare system. I am asking the Committee to pass HB 2029.

My concern is that excessive and unfair auditing practices on the part of health insurance companies are discouraging providers to work with many insurers and driving many providers out of business. This has and continues to result in significantly limiting Oregonian's access to care.

I belong to a community of colleagues with many of us gravely affected by unfair auditing practices. Starting in 2022, I was forced to go through a long and arduous audit with one of Oregon's largest healthcare insurers. In the end they concluded that they would recoup over \$10,000 of my income based on what was a clerical error due to a billing software glitch. Specifically, the glitch resulted in reflecting that I provided less than 53 minutes of therapy when in fact, I provided 60 minutes for each client the audit involved. The insurance company was not willing to consider the clerical error and not willing to negotiate. The income they recouped and what I paid in attorney consultation fees was significant. This caused me to have to look into ceasing to work with this company and having to consider ending my work with their members- most of whom happened to be ICU nurses, emergency healthcare workers, and respiratory therapists- in the middle of 2022 when we started to see

vastly growing need to help these Oregonians in particular. The insurance company was aware of that but it did not make a difference. You can imagine my dismay when I learned that many of these healthcare insurance companies are paying their auditors an incentive based on the amount of dollars they recoup.

My story is just one of many that is at the end of the day, resulting in Oregonians having limited, if any, access to mental healthcare. This bill is especially critical because the drastic increase in the demand for mental health therapy continues to trend upwards into 2025. Most folks are unaware when they sign up for coverage and pay premiums to an insurance company, that unbeknownst to them, most therapists cannot afford to take their particular insurance. And yet, their insurance companies are still happy to collect their monthly premiums and increase their profit on top of that by recouping earned income from therapists. Please do not be fooled when these insurance companies refer to being in the red as I can assure you, they are not. This about them maintaining substantial profit margins and maintaining wealth while the rest of Oregonians go with limited, and often times, no mental health care.

Thank you for the opportunity to let the Committee know about this important issue. Your support of HB 2029 has the potential to help many thousands of Oregonians state-wide.

Sincerely,
Christine
(contact information provided in the designated section)