

**Chair Nosse and Members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care,**

My name is Henrietta Knox. I have been a Licensed Professional Counselor in Oregon since 2011. I live in Harrisburg in Linn County.

I support HB 2029.

I own and operate a group practice that offers mental health services to over 1200 Oregonians per month. We work with most major insurance providers as well as Oregon Health Plan.

In 2021 one of the Coordinated Care Organizations implementing the Oregon Health Plan requested medical files to conduct an audit. This CCO is owned by a large for-profit national corporation that reports billions of dollars of revenue per year.

After reviewing our medical charts, 88 findings were reported. We were also subjected to extrapolation or statistical sampling. Practically this means the 88 findings represented about \$13,000, with extrapolation this became nearly a quarter of a million dollars.

**We are not provided with an explanation of the errors for the majority of the findings. After my insistence, I was told "This is the process, no information is provided about why the claim or documentation falls short of meeting requirements".**

We were not given any opportunity to correct clerical errors. **Any correction would be considered fraud.**

**We learned that the members of the audit team may not be licensed mental health care providers and that these audit teams were incentivized, and paid commissions over the amount of money recouped.**

This means that tax dollars distributed by OHA to providers to offer services to Oregon Health Plan members can be recouped by large for-profit corporations who can then pay a commission to their staff to audit and extrapolate large sums of dollars from small local providers. Through extrapolation, money is recouped over services that have never been reviewed. This may be done by non-licensed individuals, and an explanation of the findings may not be provided.

Remember, we are not talking about fraudulent claims. Services were rendered, and clients were helped, but money can be recouped if the therapist forgets a small detail in their documentation.

After appealing and defending all the claims and documentation, we were still expected to pay \$186,000.

**The company told us we could appeal again, but they would audit in more detail, and would implement fines on top of the recoupment and extrapolation.**

Several days later we learned that a staff member employed by the local CCO had advocated for us. The extrapolation was removed and we only owed \$6000. You can imagine our relief. A small company like ours would not be able to survive a recoupment of a quarter million dollars. We would need to close our doors, leaving therapists out of a job and hundreds of clients without services.

We learned a lot from this audit and have had several audits since. Our company's overhead costs have increased tremendously since we added compliance staff, and spent a lot of time and money training our staff in documentation and other compliance aspects.

The intense compliance demands also led to losing therapists. We remain vulnerable without the Provider Bill of Rights. I testified two years ago in support of this bill as well. Within a month after my testimony, we were hit with an audit of nearly 600 sessions. We survived, because of our hard work on compliance, but we would rather spend that extra time and money on quality care for our clients.

**I ask you to please pass HB 2029**

**The fear of audits ultimately restricts access to care for Oregonians, since fewer mental health providers are willing to work with insurance and the Oregon Health Plan. This leaves thousands of people in need without help.**

Chair Nosse and members of the House Committee on Behavioral Health and Health Care, thank you for this opportunity to share our experience with you and thank you for your commitment to improving the quality and accessibility to mental health services for Oregonians.

I would be happy to answer any questions.