

CENTER *for* PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

Texas House Committee on Public Health

Public Testimony in Support of House Bill 10

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The Center for Public Policy Priorities was born from faith and a vision of social justice in 1985 when the Congregation of Benedictine Sisters in Boerne, Texas, founded the organization as a health care policy group. CPHP is an independent public policy organization that uses data and analysis to advocate for solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential by engaging in research, policy analysis, advocacy, coalition building, public education, and lobbying.

The Center is grateful to the Chair for his work on issues affecting the mental health of all Texans. We are also thankful for each Member's commitment to serving on this committee.

The Center would like to express support for HB 10. We believe it will help ensure all Texans have access to needed mental health and substance use disorder care services.

HB 10 addresses issues with mental health parity from several angles

1. It expands the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) authority to regulate and enforce the requirements of the federal parity law and regulations, making sure to include both quantitative treatment limitations, like visit limits and copays, and non-quantitative limitations, like reviews for medical necessity.
2. It calls for collecting data that will help all stakeholders to better understand consumers' experiences with accessing health care related to mental health and substance use disorder. Having data in-hand will help all parties--insurers, TDI, legislators, and other stakeholders--make more informed decisions as we work together to achieve parity in Texas.
3. It brings stakeholders together for dialog about mental health parity and cross-agency collaboration, using a workgroup to develop a Texas strategy for parity compliance.
4. It improves consumer assistance to Texans who encounter obstacles when trying to access MH/SUD services, including consumers who encounter mental health parity violations.

Mental health parity holds great promise in helping Texans access needed health care to achieve recovery; however, we know that the promise of parity has not been fully realized. HB 10 directly addresses some ongoing challenges with oversight, data collection, cross-agency collaboration, and consumer assistance. All of these pieces working together will help ensure that more Texans have equal access to mental health and other health care services through their health insurance plans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. Any questions may be directed to Monica Villarreal, Mental Health Policy Fellow, villarreal@cphp.org.