



April 11, 2018

Representative McGuire, Chair
House Executive Departments and Administration
Legislative Office Building Room 306
33 N. State Street
Concord, NH 03301

RE: SB 487

Dear Representative McGuire and members of the House Executive Departments and Administration Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 487, which reduces barriers for licensure for behavioral health clinicians and allows certain substance use disorder treatment clinicians to bill Medicaid for services provided to Medicaid patients. Bi-State Primary Care Association respectfully requests that you recommend SB 487 ought to pass.

Bi-State is a non-profit organization that works to expand access to primary and preventive care for all New Hampshire residents with a special emphasis on the medically underserved. We represent New Hampshire's 16 community health centers, which are located in medically underserved areas throughout our state and serve more than 113,000 patients. Bi-State also operates the Recruitment Center, which has worked for more than 20 years to recruit and retain primary care providers in New Hampshire and Vermont. We recruit physicians, dentists, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and bachelor and master level behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment providers. Our Recruitment Center works with the health centers and other providers to identify barriers to recruiting, hiring, and retaining qualified clinicians in New Hampshire.

One of the often-identified barriers is the administrative burden for licensure of clinical social workers, clinical mental health counselors, and drug and alcohol counselors. A common concern is not having capacity to provide clinical experiences for health professional students while they are in training. Practices struggle to recruit and employ recently graduated drug and alcohol counselors, clinical social workers, and clinical mental health counselors due to the requirement of 3,000 hours of clinical supervised work after graduation. Practices, including community health centers, often lack a supervisor with the required matching credentials to provide this oversight. Community health centers report having to contract with outside organizations to provide the necessary supervision of health center employees to meet the licensure requirements for behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment clinicians. The changes included in SB 487 will reduce barriers and delays for training and deploying behavioral health and substance use disorder specialists in practice settings where their services are greatly needed.

New Hampshire's community health centers participate in the seven Integrated Delivery Networks and Bi-State also participates in several workgroups convened by the Department of Health and Human Services to work with the IDNs on barriers to care. SB 487 addresses many of the concerns identified by the workgroups, the health centers, the IDNs, and other partner organizations. As passed the Senate, SB 487 allows any masters-level (or higher) clinician with the equivalent or similar scope of practice to provide the required clinical supervision of clinical social workers and clinical mental health counselors. SB 487 also allows designated substance use disorder treatment providers the ability to bill Medicaid while they are working towards their 3,000 hours of required clinical supervision.

Community health centers provide high-quality, integrated primary care, behavioral health services, substance use disorder treatment, and oral health care regardless of the patient's ability to pay. The creation of Medicaid reimbursement for services provided to Medicaid patients where there is none now will alleviate the financial burden placed on the health centers' grants and other funds. The amendments to the supervisory requirements in SB 487 will increase the health centers' ability to recruit, hire, retain, and train qualified clinicians.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that you support health care clinicians and recommend SB 487 ought to pass. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information on the community health centers.

Sincerely,

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