



February 2024

To: Senate Health & Human Services Committee  
Re: SB24-59— Children's Behavioral Health Statewide System of Care

Dear Committee Members:

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) is one of the oldest women's organizations in the country, empowering women since 1881. The mission of AAUW is to advance equity for women and girls through research, education and advocacy. AAUW of Colorado represents over 700 community leaders as members in local branches around the state.

In 2023, the Legislature wisely stood up the Child Welfare System Interim Study Committee to take a holistic look at Colorado's child welfare system and address the major factors preventing the state from serving our children and families.

Senate Bill 24-059 requires the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA)-- in collaboration with other agencies--to develop and maintain a comprehensive children's behavioral health statewide system of care. Among other important changes to improve effectiveness and efficiency, the new system will allow children and youth up to 21 years of age to have a single point of access to behavioral health care regardless of payer, insurance, or income.

Recent reports have shown that girls and young women are experiencing record levels of mental health issues due to the effects of the COVID pandemic, social media pressure and other causes. Young people who receive Medicaid benefits are under even more stress due to poverty, homelessness and other factors. With so many of our youth in crisis, SB 59 is needed now.

AAUW of Colorado strongly supports this bill and requests your YES vote in committee and throughout the process of becoming law.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Su Ryden".

**Su Ryden**  
**AAUW of Colorado Public Policy Co-Director**

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*American Association of University Women--AAUW is a top-rated 501(c)3 charitable organization whose mission is to advance gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.*

My name is Olivia Keitz and I am a graduate student of social work at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. It is so important that you all vote yes for the “Children’s Behavioral Health Statewide System of Care” bill also known as SB24-059. I know for a fact that children in schools are falling through the cracks and not receiving the behavioral health services that they need because they are put into juvenile detention instead of going to a youth rehabilitation center since there are no rehabilitation centers out there that will take them. This bill would provide behavioral health services of all kinds to all children and will make sure that these services are accessible to children regardless of payer, insurance and income. This system of care has been implemented in several states in America and has proven to work, forcing some children in Colorado to travel to a different state for behavioral health care if they have a way of getting there and can afford it. This bill would decrease the amount of children going into the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and mental health professionals in the state of Colorado would be able to say that we are doing the most for the children that live here. I am a future school social worker and I believe that this Children’s Behavioral Health Statewide System of Care bill would change so many lives and provide a safety net for children who need it the most. Thank you so much for listening, and once again please vote yes for SB24-059.

Senate Health & Human Services

02/22/2024 01:30 PM

SB24-059 Children's Behavioral Hlth Statewide Sys of Care

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Dawn Fritz For Colorado Parent Teacher Association</p>	<p>Colorado PTA supports Senate Bill 24-059</p> <p>A founding purpose of PTA is to promote safety for children and youth, and we are committed to improved mental health programs and services. PTA has a long history of supporting bills and policies which provide needed access to mental health care and resources to our kids.</p> <p>Too often there are significant barriers to obtaining mental and behavioral health care and PTA's members often experience challenges when trying to access necessary mental healthcare for their children.</p> <p>PTA believes every child deserves the opportunity to grow into a happy and healthy adult, which includes mental, physical, and overall well-being. All children and youth have the right to behavioral health services and the youth mental health crisis makes access to mental health care more important than ever.</p> <p>PTA supports this bill because it would make it easier for our children and youth to access behavioral health care and will increase the number of providers.</p>