



April 11, 2023

Dear Members of the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Mental Health Colorado, we are writing in support of HB23-1269: Extended State & Boarding Patients. Mental Health Colorado is the state's leading non-profit, non-partisan organization advocating for healthier minds across the lifespan for all Coloradans.

As you are all too familiar with by now, our kids are experiencing an unprecedented mental health and well-being crisis.

- [Depression and anxiety have skyrocketed among our young people.](#)
- Suicide continues to take our kids, teens, and young adults as the [leading cause](#) of death in our state – those in rural Colorado are at [twice](#) the risk.

Despite these devastating trends, kids continue to have difficulties accessing the appropriate care they need, particularly when it comes to long-term services. Due to limited resources within communities, the current system leaves too many of our kids in crisis languishing in emergency departments, rather than getting timely care. Colorado must do better to care for our kids, especially those with high-acuity needs.

HB23-1269 puts the necessary incentives and oversight in place to ensure our system can better serve our kids with complex mental health needs. The requirements within this bill – analyzing payment rates, examining the incentives to improve access to residential treatment, and collecting data on youth who are utilizing these long-term services – will strengthen the current system, hold it accountable, and position our state to better support those who are seeking more intensive services.

We have failed our kids with complex mental health needs for too long. We believe this bill is a critical step to improve health outcomes and address the gaps in the continuum of care for Colorado youth. We urge this committee to vote yes on HB23-1269. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

Bridget Anshus
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Mental Health Colorado