

House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services
04/26/2022 01:30 PM
HB22-1375 Child Residential Treatment & Runaway Youth
Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
<p>Ashley Chase For Office of the Child's Representative</p>	<p>Hello Madame Chair and members of the committee, I am Ashley Chase, staff attorney and legislative liaison with the Office of the Child's Representative. OCR is an independent state agency within the Judicial department that oversees the attorneys who represent the best interests of every child/youth in dependency and neglect cases (among other case types). We are here in support of this bill as these are some of the toughest cases our attorneys deal with. Those cases with youth that have significantly high needs and those youth that run away. In a quick search on our listserv, there were over 40 entries about run away youth. These are the cases that keep attorneys up at night. When youth runaway it is dangerous, disruptive and damaging.</p> <p>It is also complex - we are often not talking about simple misbehavior. Youth run for many reasons, like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - running to their birth family - to have some autonomy in their life - to have some normalcy - to maintain relationships with friends - as a trauma response <p>And sometimes it IS misbehavior - good old fashioned teenage rebellion. For some youth that would mean a loss of privileges, for many foster youth it means a label of "runaway" and can have legal consequences.</p> <p>Because of the importance of these issues for youth and the complex nature, our office is in support of this bill and we look forward to being part of the work. We ask you to join us in our support.</p> <p>Thank you, Ashley Chase</p>
<p>Stephen Fisher Amend Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health Colorado Chapter</p>	<p>I am a board member of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health Colorado Chapter and also a neighbor to a residential care facility who has seen plenty of institutional neglect from that facility. I've testified at the Board of Human Services multiple times over the past 5 years regarding the 12 CCR 2509-8 7.701ff licensing rules. Deaths, drug abuse, sexual abuse, and assault have only recently hit the news (especially the 9News/Colorado Sun series) but children have been experiencing neglect for many years.</p> <p>HB 22-1375 is a step in the right direction. May I suggest additions to the composition of the Advisory Group (26-6-903). Having a</p>

	<p>"representative of a statewide association of family and children's agencies" is key, but is it perhaps too much an umbrella? Why not a single agency? Does it have to be an association? I make this comment because the advisory board is lopsided with representation from the licensees and licensors. Providers, the counties, and the state are relatively blind to the neglect that results from allowing, pursuing, and retrieving a runaway. This is because it is not recognized as neglect. Remember, neglect is what the child experiences, not the willful intent of those caring for the child. Even law enforcement fails to recognize and report. For the hundreds of runaway calls for just one facility in a year, law enforcement reports as mandatory reporters to the hotline perhaps none of them. We need to recognize that every single runaway experiences neglect by that very act. It must be recognized and prevented.</p> <p>May I also suggest that the Advisory Board be expanded to include a beat cop that is the [only] one that can retrieve a runaway. Also, someone like myself, an outsider to the system, who witnesses lots and lots of neglect, terrible policies and procedures.</p> <p>Finally, in 26-6-903(b)(IV), please keep in mind that a representative from the Facility Schools Unit in the Department of Education will likely only concern themselves with curricula. They do not regulate the huge gap between residential licensing and where these kids spend most of their days, at a Facility School. All schools experience runaways, but Facility Schools are as ill-equipped or less than residential care facilities in dealing with runaways.</p> <p>Thank you for your time, Steve Fisher 303-455-6830</p>
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April 26, 2022

Rep. Dafna Michaelson Jenet, Chair
House Public Health & Human Services Committee
200 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Chair Michaelson Jenet and Members of the House Public & Behavioral Health & Human Services Committee,

On behalf of Children's Hospital Colorado, we are pleased to share our support and urge you to support HB22-1375. Over the last year, this Committee has heard frequently from parents, youth, providers and advocates about the challenges that Colorado children and youth are facing due to the substantial gaps in accessible mental health resources across the continuum of care.

Unfortunately, Colorado currently lacks sufficient residential treatment placements to serve children with higher acuity needs, so many children are being sent out of state for treatment or many often end up with extended stays in the hospital when they no longer need a hospital level of care due to the lack of available step-down facilities. We are thankful for the leadership of members of this Committee to expand the treatment continuum and increase access to these important residential placements.

At the same time, it is critical that residential treatment facilities also provide safe, high-quality services. We understand that HB22-1375 is likely to be amended due to fiscal considerations. Nonetheless, Children's Hospital Colorado remains committed to working with the legislature, residential treatment providers, state agency partners and families to ensure the deliberations regarding quality assurance standards continue to be contemplated and acted on in the future. We strongly believe that children and families must have equitable access to the necessary behavioral health services and supports they need in their communities and it's vital for the delivery of care to be high-quality. As such, we hope that the task force components of HB22-1375 will continue to explore issues related to quality, data collection and accountability.

We look forward to the continued collaboration to prioritize residential treatment capacity in Colorado and hope that you will support HB22-1375. Thank you for your commitment to address the behavioral health needs of Colorado children and youth. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Zach Zaslow".

Zach Zaslow, Director of Government Affairs
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