

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6975

AN ACT REQUIRING A BIENNIAL STUDY OF PAYMENT PARITY FOR SERVICES UNDER CERTAIN INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE

Title: POLICIES IN THE STATE AND THE HUSKY HEALTH PROGRAM.

Vote Date: 3/5/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/26/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the commissioner of the Office of Healthcare Strategy (OHS) and the commissioner of the Department of Social Services (DSS) to work with the insurance commissioner to conduct studies every two years addressing private insurance sector payment parity in the areas of mental health services, these providers within the HUSKY Health program, and providers of mental health services within the HUSKY Health program and the private insurance market. The OHS commissioner must report by January 1, 2026, and every two years after that, to the Appropriations, Human Services, Public Health, and Insurance committees.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Sean Scanlon, Office of the Comptroller, State of Connecticut:

This bill is an important step toward ensuring payment parity between mental health and physical health services in Connecticut. I've heard countless Connecticut residents and providers share how disparities in payment for mental health services limit access to care. A recent study by the Office of Health Strategy indicates that four out of seven commercial insurers in Connecticut are showing signs of parity noncompliance. I would like the Public Health Committee to consider adding language to HB 6975 to create a Connecticut Mental Health Insurance Scorecard structured around the Healthcare Cabinet's Mental Health Subcommittee recommendation.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Thomas Burr, Public Policy Manager, Connecticut Chapter, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI):

NAMI Connecticut has been working towards having the healthcare insurance industry adhere to full compliance with existing mental health parity laws. These laws have been on the books both at the state and federal level for a long time. Too many of our members with mental health conditions routinely cannot access the mental health care they are already paying for. This bill is an important step toward ensuring payment parity between mental health and physical health services in Connecticut. The need for better data and accountability is clear.

Timothy Belliveau, MD., Yale Medicine, Yale New Haven Health:

Parity is important to our patients to ensure that they have access to all the specialists who are needed to provide comprehensive rehabilitation as they rebuild their lives after traumatic injuries. Specialized cognitive and behavioral evaluation is often an essential component of rehabilitation planning, and rehabilitation counseling is often a key component of optimal rehabilitation. This bill is an important step toward ensuring payment parity between mental health and physical health services in Connecticut.

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):

This study underscores the importance of ensuring the availability of mental health services equal to that of other healthcare services. Demand for mental health services continues to grow, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and lack of adequate payment should not be the reason individuals in Connecticut cannot access critical mental health services. CHA believes this study is crucial as it will inform where gaps in payment occur and help identify where improvements must be made to ensure access to care.

Other offering testimony in support of the bill:

- Monika Nugent, Public Policy and Advocacy Associate, Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance).
- Jordan Bryant, DEI Chair, CTAMFT
- Kristen Pendergrass, Vice President, State Policy Shatterproof
- Elizabeth I. Rathbun, Licensed Psychologist
- Mark Spellmann, Ph.D., Legislative Committee Member, Connecticut Psychological Association

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Dave Rackliffe, Asst. Clerk

Date: March 7, 2025