



State of Wisconsin

Wisconsin Council on Mental Health

1 West Wilson Street, P.O. Box 7851
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7851

Date: January 9, 2014

From: Shel Gross, Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Shel Gross'.

To: Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services

Re: Support for Mental Health Bills

The Wisconsin Council on Mental Health (WCMH) appreciates the Health and Human Services Committee consideration of a number of bills addressing mental health services and related issues. Together these bills build upon unprecedented support for expanding access to mental health treatment and intervention that began during the 2013-2015 biennial budget process. Importantly, these bills the efforts to create a stronger system of care for children and adults experiencing mental health disorders; one which supports earlier intervention and recovery.

The WCMH supports the following bills:

- **SB360, Protected Health Information:** The WCMH supported this bill but did so by a slim margin. This bill has been controversial within the mental health community because while people recognize the value of sharing information to improve integrated health care they differ around the degree to which this should be voluntary, as it is now. Unfortunately there have been many instances where medical providers, learning about a person's mental illness, discount what are legitimate physical health complaints; often with serious medical consequences to the individual. The WCMH recommends that if you support this bill that you also consider support for legislation that we anticipate to fund efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination against individuals due to their mental health conditions.
- **SB362, Grants for Crisis Intervention Team Training:** Crisis Intervention Training has enhanced law enforcement's ability to respond more appropriately to individuals with mental illnesses enhancing the likelihood for a positive outcome. Law enforcement officers who have taken the training report that it has greatly benefited them in dealing with often challenging situations.
- **SB359, Child Psychiatry Consultation Program:** This bill is based on a program from Massachusetts which was shown to greatly increase the ability of pediatricians and primary care providers to work with youth with emotional disturbances. Given the serious shortage of child

psychiatrists in most of Wisconsin this bill makes efficient use of existing resources to better meet the mental health needs of these young people. We support the bill as amended by the Assembly.

- SB366, Primary Care and Psychiatry Shortage Grant Program: This bill will address the extreme shortage of psychiatry services in many areas of Wisconsin by creating residency opportunities. We support the bill as amended by the Assembly.
- SB368: Grants to Establish Peer-Run Respite Centers: This bill will support the expansion of peer-run respite, a cost-effective alternative that can mitigate the need for emergency services. We support the bill as amended by the Assembly.
- SB409, Individual Placement and Support Program: This bill will support expansion of an evidence-based program for employment of people with serious mental illnesses, which in turn will support the recovery of these individuals. People with mental illnesses want to work but often need specialized supports in order to begin this process. We support the bill as amended by the Assembly.
- SB362, Grants for Mental Health Mobile Crisis Teams: This bill will support the development of mobile crisis in rural areas allowing a more effective intervention for someone in a mental health crisis, and often allowing for a response that does not involve incarceration.

SB127/AB360, Emergency Detention, Involuntary Commitment and SB126/AB435, Admission of Minors for Inpatient Treatment: These bills address a variety of changes to current statute developed by the Legislative Council Study Committee on Chapter 51. The WCMH appreciates the considerable efforts of this study committee to work through the challenging issues of balancing individual rights with timely access to treatment.

The WCMH has not taken positions on the following bills: SB369, County Performance on Providing Core Mental Health Services; SB410, Mental Health benefits and Reimbursement for services under Medicaid; AB488, involuntary commitment.

The WCMH is the statutorily-mandated, Governor-appointed advisory council on mental health concerns. The WCMH includes representation from a broad group of mental health stakeholders including persons living with mental illness, family members of such persons, advocates, providers (both private and public) and representatives from state agencies that address the needs of individuals with mental illnesses.

Copies:

Members, Wisconsin Council on Mental Health

Linda Harris, Administrator, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Joyce Allen, Director, Bureau of Prevention, Treatment and Recovery