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Senate
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, Oregon

Dear Senators:

I am writing to urge your support for Senate Bill 860 requiring insurance companies to reimburse mental health professionals in an equivalent manner to how they reimburse physicians, establishing true parity.

As a psychologist who has been practicing for more than forty years, first in New York State and, since 2008, in Oregon, I can attest that the most frustrating part of my job is dealing with insurance companies. I hate that it takes time and energy away from serving my clients. I have two businesses, one that provides mental health services to adults, children and families in a general psychology practice and one which provides intensive behavioral therapy to individuals on the autism spectrum. I am grateful that Oregon already has legislation that allows most individuals in need to access psychological care and autism treatments without requiring referrals from a physician. What inhibits that access is the relatively lower reimbursement rates for psychotherapy and the aggressive review process for autism treatment. Many of my colleagues choose not to participate on insurance panels since they would then be required to accept whatever rates are offered, often well below community standards.

When seeking preauthorization for autism treatment, some, but not all, insurers seem to treat me and my requests for intensive services in a hostile and combative manner, questioning my goals and challenging my recommendations. Many insurers further restrict access to appropriate and necessary autism care by severely limiting their network panels, forcing families to wait long months to begin care that we know is best started early.

Please support SB 860:

- to assure an adequate mental health work force that will be fairly reimbursed for quality service .
- to assure that MH professionals will join networks, allowing families to manage their share of the health costs more efficiently.
- To assure that utilization and management policies do not unfairly restrict access to medically necessary mental health care.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregon.

Sincerely,
Carol B. Markovics, Ph.D.