

December 9, 2021

Dear Governor Jared Polis

CBHC and our member organizations are dedicated to ensuring that the people of Colorado receive the services they need and that those services are delivered in the most efficient, accountable, and transparent manner possible. Recent news coverage raised serious questions about the current state of the behavioral health system, and we are committed to working collaboratively with the state and local government agencies and consumer ally organizations to aggressively tackle the issues.

To that end, CBHC and our members strongly support the proposal to conduct an audit of the behavioral health system. We are ready to work with the Legislative Audit Committee in service to ensure the people of Colorado are able to receive the care they need and deserve. Only with a comprehensive and objective examination of what is and is not working can constructive change happen.

We also welcome the formation of the Behavioral Health Authority (BHA). The BHA, along with a first-ever cabinet-level Behavioral Health Commissioner, will help to improve our behavioral health system. Our hope is that the BHA can help streamline our behavioral health system to make it more efficient, transparent, and accountable so that all Coloradans entering the behavioral health system hear the word “welcome” and get their needs met as soon as possible.

CBHC and our member organizations have several ideas on how we can work together to reduce client wait times. We have shared these proposals with the Behavioral Health Transformational Task Force (BHTTF), chaired by Senator Brittany Pettersen, and with the team at the Office of Behavioral Health. We look forward to working with all interested stakeholders to create a more efficient system with dramatically reduced administrative burden.

We also hope to work together to address the workforce crisis that is seriously impacting the ability to provide timely services to the people of Colorado. As part of that, we need to address clinician salaries. We have submitted proposals to the BHTTF and the JBC to address this crisis immediately and for the future, respectively. Through partnerships with policymakers, we need to commit additional resources to loan repayment and scholarship opportunities for those who would like to grow their career in this field to build a workforce that is as diverse as the population it serves.

CBHC is proud of the work that Colorado’s CMHCs do and the impact that they have. During the pandemic, they have risen to the new challenges of COVID-19 whether it is public health support, social determinants of health support, or working to meet the increased demand for the services directly provided by the CMHCs. We know that these needs have grown during the COVID-19 pandemic and that communities cannot solely rely on the CMHCs to solve all of these issues.

We look forward to partnering with you to take the steps necessary to ensure the behavioral health system can effectively and appropriately serve the needs of all Coloradans.

Sincerely,



Doyle Forrester, CEO  
Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council