

Extend the Children's Behavioral Initiative to Children with Commercial Insurance

HB.488 & S.547

An Act to Increase Access to Children's Mental Health Services in the Community

Lead Sponsors: Representative Balsler and Senator Lewis

The Issue:

The Children's Behavioral Health Initiative (CBHI) provides access to community-based services to minimize the need for out-of-home placements, but, presently, these services are only available to children enrolled in MassHealth, or those whose families pay an additional premium for "secondary MassHealth" services. Effectively, the Commonwealth is currently paying for services that could be covered by children's commercial insurance plans.

Approximately 1 in 5 children and adolescents experiences symptoms of a diagnosable mental health disorder each year.

- Half of all lifetime mental illnesses begin by age 14; three-quarters by age 24.
- Among children ages 9 to 17, 11% experience "significant impairment" 5% experience "extreme functional impairment."

An Act to Increase Access to Children's Mental Health Services in the Community requires coverage for community- and home-based behavioral health care services ("wraparound care") for children and adolescents with mental health disorders who are covered by commercial insurance.

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