

Letters, emails and calls need to be in by Friday or Monday. Please address letters:

Governor Jim Doyle
PO Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707-7863

Re: AB 75 Mental Health Access, JFC Motion 700, item 26, p. 22

Or, **FAX** 608-267-8983

Or, **call** the Governor's office at 608-266-1212 and ask for Constituent Relations. Give your name, address and professional credential and say you support this proposal, identified above. You may want to give one of two reasons why you support it. One of those reasons should be you support greater and equal access to mental health services.

Email: you can mail them at www.governor@wisconsin.gov. The CR Department reviews the emails, or so they say. Identify the proposal you are talking about, as laid out above.

Please write in your own words and provide anecdotes from your professional life if they advance the argument. You need not cover all this territory. A couple of paragraphs will do for a personal letter.

Identify what you are writing about, for example:

We (I) write in support of the mental health access amendment included in AB 75 that enables licensed mental health providers to receive third party payment. Often called "vendorship" legislation, this budget amendment would reflect the provisions of 2007 SB 246, as amended, and passed by the Senate in 2008.

Identify what the amendment does:

The amendment proposes the following changes:

- Eliminates physician prescription for mental health services.
- Allows all mental health professionals licensed under ch. 457--clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists and professional counselors--direct billing of group insurers and medical assistance.
- Ensures confidentiality of treatment records.

- o Specifies that services provided by licensed mental health professionals must occur within the scope of their licenses under chapter 457 and applicable rules.
- o Requires a provider to present in writing a grievance procedure notification to patients. AB 75 specifies three options.

Specify good public policy reasons for approving this amendment, for example:

These changes will provide Wisconsin residents with greater treatment options in a variety of settings. We see value in clinical settings—collegial development, quality assurance, assumption of liability and other overhead expenses and issues—and them to continue, but the freedom to choose private practice could provide more access points for treatment and may eliminate some overhead costs for providers. This is especially important in rural and central city areas where current services are sometimes inadequate to meet current needs.

Provide Background and rationale:

Wisconsin is one of few states to prohibit mental health professionals from direct billing of insurers and Medical Assistance for mental health services. Private pay patients can be directly billed, or some insurers will agree to third party payment through contract, but otherwise, marriage and family therapists, professional counselors and clinical social workers must work under the regulatory structure of a mental health clinic in order to be compensated.

Current law was developed nearly thirty years ago when counties ran public mental health clinics and the only licensed mental health practitioners were clinical psychologists and psychiatrists. The landscape has changed considerably since then. Now, ninety-two percent of the 850 existing mental health clinics are private clinics that contract with county departments and/or are certified by DHS to provide psychotherapy services to MA and insured populations. In 2002, the legislature granted licensure to marriage and family therapists, professional counselors and social workers; we were no longer required to practice under the supervision of a psychologist or psychiatrist except under DHS clinic regulations.

At the beginning of 2009, DHS rules governing outpatient mental health clinics were revised after 28 years to address treatment protocols and professional competencies that have changed substantially since the original law was written. Third party billing, however, requires a statutory change.

This budget provision has two effective dates. The private insurance part would become effective upon publication of the bill or when an insured's contract is renewed. The Medical Assistance provision becomes effective January 1, 2011, and carries a fiscal note because of a small estimated increase in access or utilization. Both provisions are important and must be implemented without a great time disparity in order to ensure equal access to Wisconsin residents.

Restate what you are asking them to do in closing:

As a licensed mental health professional, I ask for your support for these important changes that will provide your constituents with better access to mental health services and greater choice of venue in service provision.

Sincerely,

Name (Address, phone number if not on letterhead)