

HB0782
Christie Carr
Opposed

Dear HGO Committee Members,

As a parent of two children and having a background in school counseling, I believe in the importance of social and emotional health. I have a Masters degree in counseling and have worked with adolescents for over 20 years.

I am a proponent of 16 and 17-year-old adolescents being able to access mental health counseling and therapy even without parental consent. However, I am deeply concerned about minors being able to access other forms of mental health treatment without parental consent. I do not believe any child under the age of 18 years of age should be able to access psychiatry or mental health hospitalizations without parental consent. There are far too many children being prescribed cocktails of psychiatric drugs, and often without even seeing a therapist. I cannot support this mode of mental health treatment.

Our society has become a place where everyone wants fast food, fast answers, and high speed internet. Now, when a child has any degree of inattention or behavioral concerns, many want a fast fix and a prescription. What about the important work of teaching social emotional health? This can only come from a child working with their parents, educators, and therapists to learn better coping strategies. These strategies take time and practice in order to become life skills.

I am concerned with this bill, as it is written. It does not have an age limit and opens the mental health arena to mental health hospitalizations and pharmaceutical prescription access to children without parental knowledge or consent. This is dangerous.

My daughter, diagnosed with cyclical vomiting syndrome has been prescribed a number of drugs from the benzodiazepine class. These are the same drugs being prescribed to thousands of children with diagnoses of anxiety and other mental health concerns. She was prescribed Clonazepam to see if it would help lessen her anxiety, and stop a vomiting cycle. The side effects listed in the package insert include, "thoughts of suicide or dying, attempt to commit suicide, new or worse depression, new or worse anxiety, feeling agitated or restless, panic attacks, trouble sleeping, new or worse irritability, acting aggressive, being angry, or violent, acting on dangerous impulses, an extreme increase in activity and talking (mania), and other unusual changes in behavior or mood." With side effect such as these, parents need to consent and to monitor their child on any medication, especially medications for mental health concerns.

Please oppose HB0782, which does not expand mental health care in a safe way. I would rather see more resources for expanding more in-home and family therapy programs, thereby inviting more parent participation into the process.

Sincerely,

Christie Carr
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