

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Youth Health & Safety, Select
For HB 2404

Compiled on: Tuesday, April 4, 2023 12:27 PM

Note: Comments received by the committee reflect only the view of the individual(s) submitting the comment, who retain sole responsibility for the content of the comment. Neither the committee nor the Texas House of Representatives takes a position on the views expressed in any comment. The committee compiles the comments received for informational purposes only and does not exercise any editorial control over comments.

Hearing Date: March 27, 2023 2:30 PM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Brandon Logan, Dr.
One Accord for Kids
Midland, TX

One Accord for Kids is a community development non-profit serving Midland and the Permian Basin. Our mission is to strengthen families and connect communities specifically to increase services and improve outcomes for children and families involved in the child welfare system. Our work includes preparing our region for the implementation of Community-Based Care. Permian Basin and West Texas lack high-quality services for at-risk youth and families. We have been working with local providers and stakeholders and with the STAR Health MCO to increase access to services in West Texas.

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a crucial evidence-based intervention for families and youth at risk of referral to the juvenile justice, behavioral health, or child welfare systems. FFT is designated as a "well-supported" intervention on the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse, which means that federal matching funds are available for the intervention under the Family First Prevention Services Act.

In rural areas, like West Texas, the absence of a consistent payor for high-quality, evidence-based interventions like FFT makes it difficult to maintain a network of providers to serve our youth and families. HB 2404 will improve access to quality services by making FFT a covered service. It will also have a follow-on effect of strengthening the behavioral health services network by increasing the number and quality of behavioral health providers servicing youth and families in our region.

High-quality interventions, generally, and FFT, specifically, prevent the cascade of interventions that occur when youth and families are unable to access high-quality behavioral health services early in the continuum of need. By providing effective, family-focused intervention, FFT prevents more costly interventions later like juvenile delinquency involvement, foster care, and psychiatric hospitalization. In diverting youth and families from these more intensive interventions, FFT has resulted in cost savings in other states that have invested in the model, like Florida.

For these reasons, One Accord encourages the Committee to favorably report HB 2404.

Taylor Trevino
self - organizer
Austin, TX

I urge the legislature to support this bill to ensure at-risk youth have the resources they need to heal and grow as individuals to set them on life-long paths to success.

Christine Bryan, VP, IT and Public Policy

Clarity Child Guidance Center

SAN ANTONIO, TX

Clarity Child Guidance Center is for HB 2404. Clarity is a non-profit providing inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services to children ages 3-17. Clarity's patient census is comprised of 60% low-income, state-supported children through Medicaid, CHIP, STAR Health, STAR Kids and low-cost contracts with area local mental health authorities. Clarity also provides outpatient services to several school districts in Bexar County.

During the 86th Legislative Session, Clarity was one of the initiators of SB 1177, the "in lieu of" bill. This bill was to hasten the process by which we could add upstream mental health services to expand the continuum of care without having to go through the entire Medicaid re-contracting process. For various reasons, this bill has had ongoing implementation issues with HHSC and CMS. Functional family therapy was one of the "agreed to" services for "in lieu of" implementation but has not moved forward. At this point, going through a full Medicaid contractual change will give our state the access to these highly effective services whether "in lieu of" gets fully implemented or not.

On behalf of our kids and families, Clarity appreciates your support for HB 2404.

Jan Friese, CEO

Texas Counseling Association (TCA)

Austin, TX

TCA supports HB 2404 to allow at risk children access to functional family therapy services through Medicaid.