

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Youth Health & Safety, Select  
For HB 2638

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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.

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is a crucial evidence-based intervention for families and youth at risk of referral to the juvenile justice, behavioral health, or child welfare systems. MST 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 MST makes it difficult to maintain a network of providers to serve our youth and families. HB 2638 will improve access to quality services by making MST 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 serving youth and families in our region.

High-quality interventions, generally, and MST, 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, intensive family and community-based intervention, MST prevents more costly interventions later like juvenile delinquency involvement, foster care, and psychiatric hospitalization. In diverting youth and families from these more intensive interventions, MST has shown a return on investment of \$23.59 for every dollar spent, with an average net benefit of \$200,000 per youth served. The fiscal note accompanying the bill does not seem to reflect the potential cost savings associated with diverting youth and families from more costly interventions and out-of-home placements.

For these reasons, One Accord encourages the Committee to favorably report HB 2638.

Christine Bryan, VP, IT and Public Policy

Clarity Child Guidance Center

SAN ANTONIO, TX

Clarity Child Guidance Center is for HB 2638. 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. Multisystemic therapy was one of the "agreed to" services for "in lieu of" implementation but has not moved forward except in a very narrow population. 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 2638.