

**TO: Senate Committee on Universities, Technical Colleges, Children & Families**  
**FROM: Robert Chayer, M.D., Associate Professor, Chucker Aring Chair of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin**  
**DATE: Tuesday, May 7, 2019**  
**RE: Support for SB 113—Statewide expansion of Wisconsin's Child Psychiatry Consultation Program**

Good afternoon, Chairman Kooyenga and members of the committee. My name is Dr. Bob Chayer and I am the Chair of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to testify today in support of SB 113, which relates to expanding the Wisconsin Child Psychiatry Consultation Program.

A child's mental health significantly impacts their overall health, well-being and development. One in five young people will have diagnosable mental health symptoms during their childhood and one in ten will have a serious mental health concern that affects their ability to learn. The World Health Organization tells us that over the past decade childhood depression has increased by 18 percent and anxiety by 15 percent. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among teenagers in Wisconsin and across the country. Mental health concerns can have a serious impact on physical health and a child's progression into adulthood. Mental illnesses are associated with increased risk for chronic diseases including substance abuse, diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Nationally, mental health hospitalizations occur in 199 per 100,000 residents. In Wisconsin, that number is significantly higher at 223 per 100,000 residents.

Kids need people to care for them who are specially trained to understand their developing bodies and minds. An alarming shortage of pediatric mental health providers in Wisconsin and across the country contributes to the difficulty families have in accessing the mental and behavioral health care their children need. Nearly 50 of Wisconsin's 72 counties are designated as significant shortage areas for adult and pediatric mental health providers, including counselors, therapists, psychologists and psychiatrists. There are approximately 1.5 million children in Wisconsin, yet there are only 150 child and adolescent psychiatrists practicing in the state. In fact, Wisconsin ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in the nation related to access as measured by youth with major depression who did not receive mental health services.

With funding and support from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and the Kubly Family, the Medical College of Wisconsin and Children's operate the Child Psychiatric Consultation Program (CPCP) which provides primary care providers phone or email access to expert pediatric psychiatric experts to help answer questions and provide consultation to help appropriately screen for and diagnose a number of conditions, offer community resources and support, and appropriately manage psychotropic medication. By allowing their physicians direct access to consultation with specialists, children are able to receive adequate and timely care and referrals to additional mental health resources that may be available in their community.

Children's staff, including the intake team and child and adolescent psychologist, provide two of the three major components of the program: the resource coordination and the behavioral health psychology consultation. Additionally, all of Children's pediatric clinics in the southeastern Wisconsin region (approximately 26 clinics) and more than 140 Children's Medical Group providers are enrolled to participate in the CPCP. Many physicians call for assistance, relying on the pediatric expertise of the Child Psychiatrists at the Medical College of Wisconsin and Children's to assist in this important aspect of patient care. Additionally, the CPCP team provides medical education and training to primary care physicians, deepening their knowledge and understanding of pediatric mental health care, and increasing their comfort level in helping care for and manage future patients' needs.

The CPCP has grown to work with 150 clinics across the state, providing more than 2,500 physician consultations. However, there are still populations in Wisconsin where physicians do not have access to the valuable resources provided by CPCP. With the state's increased investment of \$1.5 million annually, as outlined in SB 113, CPCP would be able to extend services across the entire state, increasing access to mental and behavioral health care for all Wisconsin children in need.

Chairman Kooyenga and committee members, I thank you again for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 113. I am happy to answer any questions now. If you have any questions, comments or concerns after the hearing, please feel free to contact me via email at [rchayer@chw.org](mailto:rchayer@chw.org) or via phone at 414-266-2932.

*As you know, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (Children's) serves children and families in every county across the state. We have inpatient hospitals in Milwaukee and the Fox Valley. We care for every part of a child's health, from critical care at one of our hospitals, to routine checkups in our primary care clinics. Children's Hospital also provides specialty care, urgent care, emergency care, dental care, school health nurses, foster care and adoption services, family resource centers, child health advocacy, health education, family preservation and support, mental health services, pediatric medical research and the statewide poison hotline.*