

May 3, 2024

The Honorable Representative Lindsey Daugherty, Chair
Colorado House Committee on Health & Human Services
Colorado General Assembly
200 E Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Re: HB24-1471: Electroconvulsive Treatment for Minors

Dear Madame Chair Daugherty and Members of the House Committee on Health and Human Services,

On behalf of the Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council (CBHC), I am writing to express our support for HB24-1471 which permits Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) for minors under the age of 16 in Colorado when specific criteria are met. Our association, comprised of Colorado's community mental health centers and safety net behavioral health providers, recognizes the immense value of ECT as a therapeutic option for individuals confronting life-threatening conditions, particularly when conventional interventions have fallen short.

Our support for this legislation is founded not only on empirical evidence but also on the profound impact of ECT on the lives of individuals treated by our members, whose testimonies illuminate the transformative potential of this treatment modality. Our provider members have witnessed firsthand the debilitating effects of severe mental illness, including malignant catatonia, which often extend beyond emotional distress to encompass profound cognitive impairment and functional debilitation. Their journey from the depths of despair to a renewed sense of vitality and purpose underscores the indispensable role of ECT in restoring hope and facilitating recovery for individuals who have exhausted other therapeutic avenues.

It is imperative to acknowledge that ECT is not without risks, nor is it a panacea for all conditions. However, for individuals facing life-threatening malignant catatonia, ECT represents a lifeline, offering the possibility of relief and restoration when all other options have been exhausted.

By extending access to ECT for minors under the age of 16, we have the opportunity to intervene early in the course of illness, avoiding severe long-term health consequences and empowering young people to reclaim their lives. Moreover, by ensuring appropriate safeguards and oversight, we can mitigate potential risks and ensure the ethical and responsible implementation of ECT in pediatric populations.

CBHC urges Committee Members to carefully consider the profound impact that this legislation could have on the lives of individuals and families across the state. By enacting measures to facilitate access to ECT for minors, we can extend a beacon of hope to those grappling with the burdens of mental illness and advance the well-being of all Coloradans.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue and for your commitment to promoting mental health and resilience in our communities.



Frank Cornelia, MS, LPC
Deputy Executive Director
Colorado Behavioral Healthcare Council
303 E. 17th Ave., Suite 910
Denver, CO 80203
720-454-5740
fcornelia@cbhc.org

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