



# Association for Children's Mental Health

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Malisa Pearson  
*Executive Director*

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Honorable Members of the Senate Health Policy Committee:

My name is Malisa Pearson and I am the Executive Director of the Association for Children's Mental Health – Michigan's statewide family run organization supporting families raising children with emotional, behavioral, and mental health disorders.

Some of the parents who wished to testify during last week's hearing were not able to come to Lansing again today so I am going to read Deean Lantto's testimony. She is a parent of a child with significant mental health needs and is currently an active part of ACMH.

There are just a few short things I would like to address to the committee today before I read this parent's testimony.

The first is that I am a parent of a young man who suffers from Bipolar Disorder as well as Asperger's Syndrome. We have had a diagnosis of Autism/Asperger's most of his life. As a parent, it is incredibly difficult for me to reconcile how we could face a reality with the passage of Autism only legislation that tells me as a parent, my son as a consumer, and my family that we can have access to care and coverage for part of my son, but not all of my son. I am not sure I want to live in a state that says that to its citizens.

And the second thing is from me as an employer. ACMH employs almost 40 individuals statewide. As a Mental Health Advocacy organization who has been an active partner in Partners for Parity and for the push for Mental Health Parity legislation for over 12 years, it is incredibly frustrating and disturbing to me to not be able to provide access to sufficient and equitable Mental Health Care coverage to my employees. ACMH has written to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Michigan more than once requesting to purchase a rider that would allow our employees access to parity of their mental health benefit and each time we have been denied. What does that say about this state when an insurance company who can offer parity of coverage, especially to an employer whose sole focus is mental health care, refuses to allow access to that coverage simply because they are not required to by law?

Now I would like to read you the testimony of Deean Lantto. A parent from Oakland County and from Senator Marleau's district.

Sincerely,

Malisa Pearson  
Executive Director

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