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Case for House Resolution 107

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Case for House Resolution 107

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House Resolution 107

House Resolution 107 requests that the Joint Committee on Government and Finance conduct a study on mental health resources in West Virginia.

Support for HR 107

I am for this bill, as there is a significant shortage of mental health providers in West Virginia. West Virginia needs a minimum of 50 beds per 100,000 residents to meet patient need. Currently, there are 14 beds per 100,000 residents

Access

Those seeking mental health care in West Virginia report traveling miles out of their way. Many counties do not have any mental health services at all. Often, family practices physicians feel obligated to treat patients for psychiatric disorders when a psychiatrist would be better suited for the job. One county, Wyoming, has residents traveling upwards of thirty-two miles to seek care, as detailed in an article published by Kaiser Health News.

High Incidence

Eighteen percent of the U.S. population suffers from an anxiety disorder. Half of those people also suffer from depression. House Resolution 107 states that West Virginia has the 14th highest incidence of depression in the United States, putting the state significantly above the national average. Roughly 1/3 of those suffering from anxiety disorders receive treatment; imagine the combined impact a poor patient-to-bed ratio and increased incidence of depression (with anxiety being a common comorbidity) on the availability of mental health services in West Virginia.

Needs of Children

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Justice found that West Virginia was not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act concerning children suffering from mental illness. It was found that children were “unnecessarily” separated from their loved ones when undergoing treatment. Many children were placed out-of-state for treatment. The study also found that West Virginia did not look to expand community based-resources, nor did it work to establish collaborative treatment plans for children suffering from multiple mental illnesses.

What is the Impact?

In conclusion, I find the research discussed in this bill necessary in order to go about resolving the deficit in mental health care in West Virginia. My recommendation for the bill would be to add a clause specific to pediatric psychiatric services, as the state was found particularly lacking in this area. After the research is done, I would like to see the bill moved to action in a timely manner. Filling this deficit will allow more of those in need of mental health services to receive care, as well as create jobs and decrease funding needed for out-of-state psychiatric send-offs.