



April 8, 2024

State of Nevada
Interim Finance Committee
Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, Chair
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair
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Dear Members of the Nevada Interim Finance Committee,

I am honored to submit this letter on behalf of Northern Nevada HOPES (HOPES) in support of Governor Lombardo's plan to invest more than \$200 million in Medicaid funds to expand children's behavioral healthcare in Nevada. The expansion of these very important services in Nevada, made possible through Senate Bill 435 (2023), will not only have a positive impact on the children of our state, but also increases the opportunity for families to obtain affordable life-changing and life-saving care.

ABOUT HOPES

HOPES' mission is to provide high-quality affordable medical, behavioral health and support services for all. HOPES is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) that provides integrated medical care and support services to individuals with and without health insurance. HOPES provides primary medical care, mental health services, substance use treatment, and a plethora of wrap-around services that enhance our holistic care.

Services: Our welcoming and innovative one-stop-shop healthcare model helps our largely low-income client population access care by removing barriers such as distance, lack of transportation, fear of stigma and inability to pay. Services include:

- Adult and pediatric primary care including chronic disease management, HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) testing and treatment, radiology, and an on-site pharmacy equipped with a medication delivery program.
- Behavioral health services including; individual, group, and family counseling, psychiatric medication management, Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program for opioid and alcohol addiction, and an Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP).
- Additional services include: emergency rental and utility payment assistance, medical and non-medical case management, insurance enrollment and benefits counseling, and transportation assistance.

In 2023, HOPES provided care to 14,294 patients. Of HOPES' patients:

- 10% are experiencing homelessness;
- 34% utilize behavioral health services;
- 37% live at or below 138% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
- 3,264 were pediatric patients who accounted for 12,141 total visits
 - 56 pediatric patients accessed play therapy;
 - 533 pediatric patients accessed behavioral health services; and
 - 141 pediatric patients accessed nutrition programs.

Statistics: There continues to be significant mental health service gaps for children in Nevada. Mental health service penetration rates or the percentage of the population receiving mental health services, is dramatically lower in Nevada than the U.S. national average.

- According to the CDC, only about 20% of children with mental, emotional or behavioral health disorders receive care from a specialized mental health provider.
- HOPES accepts patients regardless of their ability to pay: 25% have commercial insurance; 35% utilize Medicaid, 8% utilize Medicare and 32% are uninsured.
- According to the Guinn Center for Policy Priorities, roughly 17.0 percent of Nevada's population is enrolled in Medicaid, which is below the U.S. average of 19.6 percent.
- In Nevada, 61% of all children are covered by Medicaid, including 32% of children with special healthcare needs.

HOPES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

To ensure that the medical and mental health needs of our community are met, HOPES opened a second clinic located next to the Washoe County-operated Emergency Homeless Shelter on April 1, 2024. This new location will expand services to an additional 12,000 individuals. HOPES developed an expansion strategy which includes providing services for the entire family and determined services at the new clinic would be for adult patients only, allowing us to expand family and pediatric services at our original clinic on W. 5th Street in downtown Reno.

As you are aware, children across the state are currently facing an indisputable mental health crisis, with Nevada's youth having the ninth highest prevalence of mental illness and the lowest rates of access to care in the nation. Seventy-two percent of those ages 12 to 17 with depression say they did not receive any form of mental health care in the last year, with Nevada ranking last in the country for youth access to mental health services.

This is an issue that will require continuous engagement from policymakers, educational leaders and key stakeholders if we want to reverse the trend of declining youth mental health. HOPES will continue to work with community stakeholders to develop partnerships to ensure that children have increased access to affordable, high-quality behavioral health services.

We are grateful to the Interim Finance Committee for consideration of this very important expansion of behavioral health services in Nevada. Increasing funding for behavioral health services to Nevada's children will not only have a tremendous impact on individual families, it also shows Nevada is a leader in the effort to provide services to our most vulnerable residents.

We at HOPES are here to partner with you as we work together to ensure that Nevadans are offered the opportunities necessary to obtain quality medical and behavioral healthcare services. Please contact me if you have any questions or if I can provide support as you consider this important funding request at

██████████ or ██████████.

Sincerely,



Sharon Chamberlain
CEO, Northern Nevada HOPES