



March 9, 2022

House Education Committee
Delaware General Assembly
411 Legislative Avenue
Dover, DE 19901

Re: Letter of Support for Mental Health Care/Wellness Bills

Members of the House Education Committee,

On behalf of ChristianaCare, I write to express our support for HB 300 and HB 301. If passed, this package of bills will provide tremendous behavioral health supports for children in Delaware.

At ChristianaCare, we strive to serve our neighbors with excellence and love. This includes our dedication and commitment to providing high-quality behavioral health care to children and families in our community. ChristianaCare has a long history of supporting adolescent and adult populations through innovative medical and behavioral health care that is essential for them to thrive in school, in the community, and in life. We deeply understand the behavioral health challenges in our community and are committed to addressing these issues for all members of our community, as evidenced by our work to implement, build upon, and strengthen our multi-year behavioral health plan.

We take care of families, and our health care providers are on the front lines with families who are struggling with behavioral health issues. Unfortunately, the impacts of COVID-19 have significantly exacerbated the mental health and substance use disorder issues in our community. Children and families in Delaware have suffered immensely, and already significant behavioral health needs have become far worse. That is why we continue to strengthen and expand behavioral health services in all 20 of our school based health centers in Delaware. We know how important it is to provide access to critical behavioral health and social care services in schools, which enables us to intervene early at a critical time in a child's life—and often when they need it most. We also know how important crisis care is for children, which is why we are working to develop a new pediatric behavioral health and substance use disorder triage and crisis stabilization unit on ChristianaCare's Newark campus. The unit will expand our capacity to better serve our adolescent population in a safe space outside of an Emergency Department setting.

According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, every dollar invested in mental health can provide up to ten times the savings in health care, criminal and juvenile justice, and lost productivity. The time to invest is now. These bills will be an important next step to providing critical behavioral health resources to Delawareans in need. We fully support HB 300 and HB 301. We must act to provide the right resources for Delaware families, when and

where they need them. We appreciate your consideration of these bills and hope that you will support their passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'BTR', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Bettina Tweardy Riveros
Chief Health Equity Officer
Senior Vice President Government Affairs and Community Engagement
ChristianaCare