

New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies, Inc.
Innovating for Progress|Partnering for Solutions

September 13, 2018

**FY 2019
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The Honorable Herb Conaway, Chair
Assembly Health and Senior Services Committee
Bldg. C, Suite 450
Delran Professional Center
8008 Rt. 130 North
Delran, NJ 08075

Testimony in Support of A2391

**“Concerns Early Intervention Support Services Program in DHS
and expansion of program to all counties.”**

On behalf of the New Jersey Association of Mental Health and Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA), I wish to thank Chairman Conaway, Vice-chair Pinkin and other members of the Committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on Assembly Bill 2391. NJAMHAA and its members, among which are all of the existing Early Intervention Support Services (EISS) programs and most of the Screening Centers, strongly support this bill. We thank Assemblymen Schaer, Benson and Johnson for sponsoring this legislation which recognizes that expansion of EISS programs is part of the solution to address the long waits experienced by a patients seeking psychiatric care in emergency departments (EDs).

NJAMHAA represents 160 hospital-based and freestanding mental health and substance use treatment providers that serve over 500,000 New Jersey children and adults with mental health and substance use disorders annually. The expertise of these organizations is unmatched, as are the standards of care they meet and exceed. They provide services along a continuum of care that, in all instances, seek to avert crises and avoid hospitalizations but recognize that the volume of individuals seeking behavioral health services in EDs has been increasing for several years. ED staff are overwhelmed and are often unable to offer the appropriate, specialized care that patients in psychiatric distress need in a timely manner. These patients are then negatively affected by the long waits they have in tumultuous waiting rooms.

EISS programs, in partnership with Screening Centers, have been extremely successful in diverting individuals from both EDs and hospitalizations. Every county in New Jersey should benefit from these extremely effective services. In order to maximize success, NJAMHAA



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recommends amending A2391 to include a provision requiring every EISS program to have a written affiliation agreement with one or more screening centers serving their county.

NJAMHAA urges all members of the Committee to vote yes on A2391. As always, we remain available to address any questions you may have regarding this bill, EISS services or other behavioral health issues. Please feel free to contact me at 609-838-5488 extension 292 or at dwentz@njamhaa.org.

Sincerely,



Debra L. Wentz, PhD
President and CEO

