

August 16, 2019

Governor Brad Little  
Office of the Governor  
700 W Jefferson Street  
Boise, ID 83702



Dear Governor Little,

We are writing to you today to convey our support for the Governor's Behavioral Health Strategic Planning and Implementation Group proposal that we, the Idaho Behavioral Health Alliance (IBHA), crafted with the input of diverse stakeholders in the behavioral health field. The success of Idaho's behavioral healthcare system depends on dynamic and engaged multi-sector perspectives coalescing around a long-term and comprehensive plan for Idaho's behavioral healthcare system. By bringing together a strategic planning and implementation group to address gaps in our current system, you can help lead the way towards solution-oriented and cost-effective behavioral healthcare delivery in Idaho.

The IBHA is a statewide network of consumers, consumer advocates, and behavioral healthcare professionals dedicated to system transformation and integration of mental health and substance use disorder treatment into Idaho's primary care system. We believe this can be achieved by prioritizing workforce development along the entire continuum of care, reforming payment models to reflect accountability and transparency, and by listening to advocates who provide critical feedback on the system's efficacy. Most importantly, this work can most effectively be achieved through a multi-year implementation plan based on known recommendations that are already in place.

Idaho has made significant steps toward tackling the barriers to behavioral health services, including the creation of crisis centers and regional behavioral health boards. However, since so much has been focused on crisis care instead of preventive and community-based services, we continue to see an escalation of pressure on Idaho's hospitals, law enforcement, and communities and families that are ill-equipped to handle the demand.

Existing gaps in Idaho's behavioral healthcare delivery system cannot be addressed in silos. Input from multiple stakeholders, coordinated through the proposed strategic planning and implementation group, will be a critical step towards improving behavioral healthcare delivery statewide. That is why the IBHA set out to create this proposal and to gather insight and support from relevant agencies and organizations.

In addition to improving behavioral health services for Idahoans, a coordinated strategic planning and implementation group will help Idaho realize significant budgetary savings. By reducing the need for crisis response, lessening the burdens of behavioral health cases for Idaho's criminal justice system, and increasing access to preventive care, overall behavioral healthcare and criminal justice costs will be reduced. The timing of this implementation group also correlates well with Idaho's implementation of Medicaid expansion to ensure that savings

anticipated as a result of that program are fully realized and reinforced throughout Idaho's behavioral healthcare system.

Much like many of those seeking access to quality and affordable behavioral health services, Idaho's behavioral healthcare system is in crisis. The road toward improving health outcomes for all Idahoans requires bold leadership, and we respectfully ask you to meet the challenge.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal. We are here to assist you and your office in any next steps needed to establish this strategic planning and implementation group.

Sincerely,

The Idaho Behavioral Health Alliance Steering Committee

The IBHA is an initiative of Idaho Voices for Children, a program of Jannus. Our steering committee includes the following representation:

- Empower Idaho
- Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Idaho)
- DisAbility Rights Idaho
- Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities
- Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health
- Idaho Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health
- CCJ (Centro de Comunidad y Justicia)
- Idaho Hospital Association
- Saint Alphonsus
- Consumer Advocates: Kathie Garrett, former Idaho state legislator and president of NAMI Idaho; Misty Dawn James, Ph. D. Education; Dr. Ryan Billington, University of Washington Resident Psychiatrist

Webpage: [www.idahovoices.org/behavioralhealth](http://www.idahovoices.org/behavioralhealth)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IdahoBehavioralHealthAlliance/>