



January 10, 2024

RE: NH SB 403

From: JoAnne M. Malloy, Ph.D., Research Associate Professor

I appreciate the opportunity to offer information in support of SB 403, relative to healthcare workforce investments. The critical healthcare workforce shortage in our state is well documented, reported by the NH Behavioral Health Association, NH Hospital Association, and NH Community Mental Health Centers. These shortages fuel wait lists and adversely impact the quality of care. It is also clear that healthcare professionals are leaving the field, moving to other states, and choosing not to enter professional degree programs. The legislature provided critical resources to improve reimbursement rates in 2019; however, more investments are needed to feed the workforce development pipeline, including recruiting and developing front line workers and instituting creative solutions for bringing new individuals into the healthcare workforce.

Included in SB 403 is funding that will continue a workforce training program at the University of New Hampshire for non-clinical paraprofessional and peer support staff. This program, which I lead, has already trained 102 individuals who work in federally qualified healthcare clinics, family resource centers, community mental health centers, schools, shelters, and programs for individuals in recovery from substance use disorders. Trainees engage in 3 college level courses and a year-long apprenticeship that has been approved by the U. S. Department of Labor. They take the first step towards becoming Certified Recovery Support Workers and learn how to provide high-quality care coordination.

Funded by a federal grant that is ending in August, over 60% of our trainees are in recovery and have unique and important experiences that they bring to the work. Nearly 80% indicate that the coursework is relevant to their jobs, culturally appropriate for the work they do, and that they feel much more confident in their ability to support children, youth and families impacted by substance use or mental health challenges. We are working with community partners and the University to sustain the coursework; however, the on-the-job mentoring and stipends provided by the grant are critical to each trainee's ability to participate in the program and apply their skills.

Many of our graduates have gone on to enroll in bachelors and master's level programs, stating, "I never thought I could go to college," and, "this program taught me about what happened to me in my family, and now I can give much better support to others." Their

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employers state, "we could not afford to offer this type of training to our peer or paraprofessional staff, who are so important to the of quality of care we provide, and "we will help you in any way we can to continue this program."

Front-line workers such as trained peer support workers, community health workers, and paraprofessionals provide personalized, community-based care that allows licensed clinical staff to provide much-needed treatment. They are a critical element of our workforce and deserve to be supported as they seek to improve their skills and improve the lives of NH children, youth, and families.

Thank you for considering SB 403, and for more information about our training program, visit: <https://iod.unh.edu/building-futures-together>

Sincerely,

JoAnne M. Malloy

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