

April 15th, 2009

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Testimony of Arnold Salazar

Thank you for allowing me to testify today on HB 1119. My name is Arnold Salazar; I am the CEO of Colorado Health Partnerships. We are a mental health managed care company providing mental health care to Medicaid clients.

We cover 43 counties most of them rural and frontier counties. Our area is the entire west slope. And southern Colorado from Colorado Springs to the Kansas border south, including the San Luis Valley, where I live.

Our company is composed of 8 community mental health centers and a for-profit managed services organization, ValueOptions.

I come to you today in support of this bill. Substance abuse as we know is a problem across this state and across the nation. But rural Colorado faces many more challenges.

Public treatment programs are the only entities that provide these services in our area. Distances between programs and the volume of referrals make it difficult to develop a financial model that can make these programs work. Without public support these services would not exist.

I've lived and worked in the San Luis Valley my entire career and in the field of mental health. I've run substance abuse programs. So I know firsthand the benefit these programs provide. Substance abuse services have never been adequately funded yet what has been done with minimal resources has had a great impact on.

I am confident that this bill will provide resources that will make a difference. Your investment in rural Colorado will be greatly appreciated and you will realize many positive outcomes from this legislation.

Thank you again.


Arnold Salazar