



Florida Behavioral Health Association

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For Immediate Release

March 8, 2022

Contact: Mary Katherine Delegal

marykatherine@floridabha.org

(850) 566-8065

Statement By FBHA President and CEO, Melanie Brown-Woofter
Re: Florida Legislature Passing Important Mental Health Bills
Breaking Barriers to Care (SB 1844) and Modernizing Florida's Baker Act (SB 1262)

Tallahassee, Fla. – “On behalf of the [Florida Behavioral Health Association's](#) (FBHA) 70 community mental health and substance abuse providers we extend our deepest gratitude to Senate President Pro-Tempore Aaron Bean, Senator Danny Burgess, and Representatives Ralph Massullo and Linda Chaney, as well as the entire Florida Legislature for their unwavering commitment to improving access to lifesaving mental health and substance use care.

“By sponsoring and supporting [SB 1262](#), Senator Burgess and Representative Massullo have made Floridians who struggle with mental health and substance use disorders a priority. By updating the Baker Act and Marchman Act to reflect best practices, SB 1262 makes it less intimidating for families to access emergency behavioral health services. These changes will eliminate barriers to care by ensuring that families and loved ones have every opportunity to engage in patient care.

“Thanks to Senator Bean and Representative Chaney for their leadership by sponsoring [SB 1844](#), which guarantees that a child being treated for a mental health condition is no longer subjected to the court process. This bill reduces the stigma related to mental health by allowing a parent to bring their child in for emergency mental health care without fear of court involvement. Removing court involvement shifts mental health crises out of the legal system, emphasizing that mental health should instead be addressed by our health care system and is just as important as physical health.”

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Background:

SB 1262-- Mental Health and Substance Use

SB 1262 invests in the well-being of Floridians by updating the Baker Act and Marchman Act to reflect current best practices. These new changes do several things to support an individual experiencing a

mental health crisis. It will allow providers to notify the patients' loved ones when the patient presents for an emergency mental health or substance use service. It also allows a psychiatric APRN, under the protocol of a physician, to release a patient in a community mental health center from a Baker Act. Finally, it will send a patient back into the community with information and referrals on follow-up services when leaving a facility to help reduce rehospitalizations.

SB 1844 -- Voluntariness of a Minor

SB 1844 helps to break down barriers to care and lessens the stigma that still surrounds mental health by allowing a parent, along with a medical professional, to make a healthcare decision regarding treatment for his or her child in a mental health emergency situation.

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The Florida Behavioral Health Association is a non-profit organization that provides statewide leadership on behavioral health policy and practice. FBHA supports member agencies offering services to those in need of mental health and substance use disorder assistance and support. Its members include a broad range of provider types, ranging from small specialty organizations to comprehensive treatment organizations with multiple locations within a geographic region. For more information, please visit www.floridabha.org