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Statement by Lora Pellegrini, President and CEO of the Massachusetts Association of Health Plans, on the Senate’s Mental Health ABC Act: Addressing Barriers to Care.

“The Massachusetts Association of Health Plans and our members place a high priority on providing access to high quality, affordable behavioral health care, in compliance with state and federal mental health parity laws.”

“We applaud the Senate and, in particular, Senate President Karen Spilka for her leadership in seeking to end the stigma associated with mental health treatment and her efforts to ensure that all individuals get the care they need. We thank her for her willingness to work with us as the Senate developed their bill and we look forward to continuing to work with her and Senate leadership, including Senator Cindy Friedman, Chair of Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, Senator Julian Cyr, Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health and Substance Use, and Senator Michael Rodrigues, Chair of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, as the legislation moves forward.”

“We believe it is imperative that the entire health care system, not simply health plans, be responsible for helping us reach our shared goals of treating mental illness the same way we treat physical illness, using evidence-based standards and best practices to ensure optimal outcomes for patients. The Senate bill moves us in that direction by requiring health plans and providers to use criteria developed by the American Society of Addiction Medicine. Additionally, we must ensure that state agencies work together to establish a uniform interpretation of the federal mental health parity law and issue state guidance so that Massachusetts consumers, employers, providers and health plans can understand their rights and responsibilities under the law free of competing interpretations. These are important components that should be part of any final law.”

About MAHP

The Massachusetts Association of Health Plans represents 17 health plans covering more than 2.8 million Massachusetts residents. It is dedicated to improving health for all in Massachusetts by promoting affordable, safe and coordinated health care.

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