

**SENATE . . . . . No. 614**

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PRESENTED BY:

***Kenneth J. Donnelly***

*To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:*

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act to promote the accessibility, quality and continuity of care for consumers of behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental health services.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	
<i>Kenneth J. Donnelly</i>	<i>Fourth Middlesex</i>	
<i>Kenneth I. Gordon</i>	<i>21st Middlesex</i>	<i>1/27/2017</i>
<i>Daniel M. Donahue</i>	<i>16th Worcester</i>	<i>1/27/2017</i>
<i>Jonathan Hecht</i>	<i>29th Middlesex</i>	<i>1/30/2017</i>
<i>Ruth B. Balsler</i>	<i>12th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2017</i>
<i>Marjorie C. Decker</i>	<i>25th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/1/2017</i>
<i>Colleen M. Garry</i>	<i>36th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/2/2017</i>
<i>Sal N. DiDomenico</i>	<i>Middlesex and Suffolk</i>	<i>2/3/2017</i>
<i>Paul R. Heroux</i>	<i>2nd Bristol</i>	<i>2/3/2017</i>
<i>James B. Eldridge</i>	<i>Middlesex and Worcester</i>	<i>2/3/2017</i>
<i>Peter V. Kocot</i>	<i>1st Hampshire</i>	<i>2/3/2017</i>

**SENATE . . . . . No. 614**

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By Mr. Donnelly, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 614) of Kenneth J. Donnelly, Kenneth I. Gordon, Daniel M. Donahue, Jonathan Hecht and other members of the General Court for legislation to promote the accessibility, quality and continuity of care for consumers of behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental health services. Health Care Financing.

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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

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**In the One Hundred and Ninetieth General Court  
(2017-2018)**  
\_\_\_\_\_

An Act to promote the accessibility, quality and continuity of care for consumers of behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental health services.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1           WHEREAS, A substantial amount of behavioral health, substance use disorder and  
2           mental health services provided in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is purchased for the  
3           benefit of patients by carriers and behavioral health managers engaged in the provision of health  
4           care financing services, or is otherwise delivered subject to the terms of agreements between  
5           carriers, behavioral health managers and health care professionals and providers;

6           WHEREAS, Carriers and behavioral health managers are able to control patient access to  
7           health care professionals and providers by restricting patient utilization of services of health care  
8           professionals or providers to those with whom the carriers have contracted and through  
9           utilization review programs and other managed care tools and associated coverage and payment  
10          policies;

11           WHEREAS, The asymmetrical power of carriers and behavioral health managers in  
12 markets for behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental health services in the  
13 Commonwealth of Massachusetts has led to a market failure that threatens the availability of  
14 high quality, cost effective behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental health services;

15           WHEREAS, The power of carriers and behavioral health managers to unilaterally impose  
16 contract terms that providers must either accept or reject without negotiation jeopardizes the  
17 ability of providers to deliver the superior quality behavioral health, substance use disorder and  
18 mental health services that have been traditionally available in this commonwealth;

19           WHEREAS, Providers do not have sufficient market power to reject unfair provider  
20 contract terms that impede their ability to deliver appropriate care;

21           WHEREAS, When providers of behavioral health, substance use disorder or mental  
22 health services do reject unfair contract terms and terminate their contracts with certain carriers,  
23 the patients whose services are covered by those carriers are often unable to continue treatment  
24 with such providers, to the detriment of patients in need of these services;

25           WHEREAS, Inequitable reimbursement, unduly time-consuming administrative  
26 requirements, and other unfair payment terms adversely affect access to and the quality of patient  
27 care by reducing the number of behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental health  
28 providers willing to accept insurance carrier reimbursement for their services;

29           WHEREAS, Empowering providers of behavioral health, substance use disorder and  
30 mental health services to jointly negotiate with carriers and behavioral health managers as  
31 provided in this act will help restore the competitive balance and increase access to behavioral

32 health, substance use disorder and mental health services in this commonwealth, thereby  
33 providing benefits for patients and consumers;

34 WHEREAS, Empowering providers of behavioral health, substance use disorder and  
35 mental health services to jointly negotiate with carriers and behavioral health managers is  
36 necessary to provide access to quality behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental  
37 health services for the citizens of this commonwealth;

38 NOW, THEREFORE, This bill is necessary, proper and constitutes an appropriate  
39 exercise of the authority to regulate the business of insurance and the delivery of behavioral  
40 health substance use disorder and mental health services in the Commonwealth of  
41 Massachusetts.

42 SECTION 1. Section 1 of chapter 176O of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2014  
43 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting in the definition of Behavioral Health Manager,  
44 after the word “carrier.” the words:- , division of medical assistance, or a self-insured health  
45 benefit plan.

46 SECTION 2. Said chapter 176O of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby further  
47 amended by inserting after section 27 the following sections:-

48 Section 28. Joint Negotiations Between Carriers and Providers of Behavioral Health  
49 Substance Use Disorder and Mental Health Services.

50 (1) Health care professionals who provide behavioral health, substance use disorder and  
51 mental health services in the commonwealth are hereby authorized to jointly negotiate with  
52 carriers and behavioral health managers and these joint negotiations and related joint

53 communications and activities shall be immune from challenge under the antitrust laws pursuant  
54 to the State Action Doctrine through the articulated State policy displacing competition with a  
55 joint negotiation process, and the active state supervision of that process, provided in this act.  
56 Providers of behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental health services may jointly  
57 negotiate with carriers and behavioral health managers and engage in related joint activity  
58 regarding fee, fee-related matters and non-fee-related matters, which may affect patient care,  
59 including, but not limited to, any of the following:

60 (a) The amount of payment or the methodology for determining the payment for a  
61 behavioral health, substance use disorder or mental health service;

62 (b) The procedure code and description of service or services which are reimbursed and  
63 covered by a payment;

64 (c) The amount of any other component and associated costs of providing services of the  
65 reimbursement methodology for a behavioral health, substance use disorder or mental health  
66 service;

67 (d) The determination, both substantive and procedural, of medical necessity and other  
68 conditions of coverage, including prior authorization;

69 (e) Utilization review criteria and procedures;

70 (f) Clinical practice guidelines;

71 (g) Preventive care and other clinical management policies;

72 (h) Patient referral standards and procedures, including, but not limited to, those  
73 applicable to out-of-network referrals;

- 74 (i) Drug formularies and standards and procedures for prescribing off-formulary drugs;
- 75 (j) Quality assurance programs;
- 76 (k) Respective provider and carrier liability for the treatment or lack of treatment of plan  
77 enrollees;
- 78 (l) The method and timing of claims filings and payments, including, but not limited to,  
79 interest and penalties for late payments;
- 80 (m) The terms and conditions for amending any agreement between providers and a  
81 health insurer, including the amendment of payment methodologies, fee schedules, and payment  
82 and claims policies and procedures;
- 83 (n) Other administrative procedures, including, but not limited to, enrollee eligibility  
84 verification systems, claim documentation requirements, and auditing procedures;
- 85 (o) Credentialing standards and procedures for the selection, retention and termination of  
86 participating providers;
- 87 (p) Mechanisms for resolving disputes between the carrier and providers of behavioral  
88 health, substance use disorder and mental health services, including, but not limited to, claims  
89 payment and the appeals process for utilization review and credentialing; and
- 90 (q) The carrier plans sold or administered by the insurer in which the providers are  
91 required to participate.

92 (2) The following requirements shall apply to the exercise of joint negotiation rights and  
93 related activity by providers of behavioral health, substance use disorder and mental health  
94 services under this section:

95 (a) Providers shall select the members of their joint negotiation group by mutual  
96 agreement and may communicate with each other for purposes of forming or considering  
97 forming a joint negotiation group about any subject of negotiation permitted by this act;

98 (b) Providers shall designate a joint negotiation representative as the sole party authorized  
99 to negotiate with the carrier on behalf of the providers as a group;

100 (c) Providers may communicate with each other and their joint negotiation representative  
101 with respect to the matters to be negotiated with the carrier or behavioral health manager;

102 (d) Providers may agree upon proposals to be presented by their joint negotiation  
103 representative to the carrier or behavioral health manager;

104 (e) Providers may agree to be bound by the terms and conditions negotiated by their joint  
105 negotiation representative;

106 (f) The joint negotiation representative may provide the providers with the results of  
107 negotiations with the carrier and an evaluation of any offer made by the carrier or behavioral  
108 health manager, and providers may communicate with each other and their joint negotiation  
109 representative regarding the results of such negotiations or terms of such offer, including the  
110 acceptance, rejection, and any counterproposal regarding such offer or any part thereof;

111 (g) The joint negotiation representative may reject a contract proposed by a carrier or  
112 behavioral health manager on behalf of the providers so long as the providers remain free to  
113 individually contract with the carrier; and

114 (h) Provided, nothing herein shall be construed to mean that discussions among and  
115 between providers, whether or not in the context of forming or working with a joint negotiation  
116 group, violates this statute or the antitrust laws, provided such discussions do not constitute a  
117 contract, combination or conspiracy in restraint of trade.

118 (3) A joint negotiation representative shall notify a carrier or behavioral health manager  
119 of the intent of a joint negotiation group to enter into joint negotiations and shall inform the  
120 carrier or behavioral health manager of the members of the joint negotiation group. It shall be  
121 unlawful for either party to a negotiation to refuse or fail to meet and negotiate in good faith.  
122 Upon a petition by either party, if the attorney general determines that either party to the  
123 negotiation has failed to meet or negotiate in good faith, or if the attorney general determines that  
124 the parties are at impasse, the attorney general shall appoint an impartial mediator and arbitrator  
125 who shall be empowered to engage in fact finding regarding the issues and terms under  
126 negotiation and, in the event efforts to mediate an agreed upon resolution are not successful, to  
127 render a determination on the disputed terms which shall be final and binding upon the parties,  
128 subject to the approval process provided in section 5 of chapter 251. The parties to the  
129 negotiations shall share equally in the cost of the services of the impartial mediator and  
130 arbitrator. The individual serving as the impartial mediator and arbitrator shall have a  
131 background in issues related to the provision of behavioral health, substance use disorder and  
132 mental health services as well as dispute resolution.

133 (4) No terms of a jointly negotiated contract or terms determined by an arbitrator  
134 pursuant to section 4 of chapter 251 shall be effective until the terms are approved by the  
135 Behavioral Health Insurance Contracts Review Board, established by section 30 of this chapter.  
136 The Behavioral Health Insurance Contract Review Board shall determine whether a proposed  
137 contract promotes the availability of quality behavioral health, substance abuse, and mental  
138 health services and approval or disapproval shall be based on this determination. A petition  
139 seeking approval shall include the names and business addresses of the joint negotiation  
140 representative, the members of the joint negotiating group, and the carrier or behavioral health  
141 manager, the negotiated provider contract terms or contract terms determined by the arbitrator,  
142 and such other data, information and documents that the providers or carrier desire to submit in  
143 support of their petition or in opposition to a petition which is based on an arbitrator's  
144 determination pursuant to section 4 of chapter 251. The Behavioral Health Insurance Contract  
145 Review Board shall either approve or disapprove a petition within 30 days after the petition is  
146 filed. If any petition is disapproved, the Behavioral Health Insurance Contract Review Board  
147 shall furnish a written explanation of any deficiencies with such petition along with a statement  
148 of specific remedial measures as to how such deficiencies may be corrected. It shall be unlawful  
149 for a party to refuse to negotiate in good faith concerning any deficiencies identified by the  
150 Behavioral Health Review Board and the impasse and arbitration provisions of section 4 of  
151 chapter 251 shall apply to negotiations regarding modifications of a disapproved provider  
152 contract or provider contract terms. Any revised petition for approval shall be submitted to the  
153 Behavioral Health Review Board in accordance with these same procedures.

154 (5) Any petition and related documents submitted under section 5 of chapter 251 shall be  
155 considered confidential, not a public record under section 7 of chapter 4 and not subject to  
156 disclosure under section 10 of chapter 66.

157 (6) Nothing contained in this act shall be construed (a) to prohibit or restrict activity by  
158 providers of behavioral health, substance use disorders or mental health services that is  
159 sanctioned under federal or state laws; (b) to prohibit or require governmental approval of or  
160 otherwise restrict activity by providers that is not prohibited under federal antitrust laws; (c) to  
161 require approval of provider contract terms to the extent that the terms are exempt from state  
162 regulation under section 514 of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, Public  
163 Law 93-406; or (d) to expand a health care professional's scope of practice or to require a carrier  
164 or behavioral health manager to contract with any type or specialty of health care professionals.

165 (7) If any provision of this act or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is  
166 held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of the chapter, which  
167 can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of  
168 this chapter are declared to be severable.

169 Section 29. Retaliation Against Providers; Remedies.

170 (1) A carrier or behavioral health manager shall not take retaliatory action against a  
171 provider because the provider engages in joint negotiations and related activities permitted by  
172 this act or because a provider chooses not to engage in joint negotiations and related activities.

173 (2) Any provider or former provider aggrieved by a violation of this section may, within  
174 2 years, institute a civil action in the superior court. Any party to said action shall be entitled to  
175 claim a jury trial. All remedies available in common law tort actions shall be available to

176 prevailing plaintiffs. These remedies are in addition to any legal or equitable relief provided  
177 herein. The court may:

178 (a) issue temporary restraining orders or preliminary or permanent injunctions to restrain  
179 continued violation of this section;

180 (b) restore the provider to the status held prior to the retaliatory action;

181 (c) compensate the provider for three times the lost remuneration, and interest thereon;  
182 and

183 (d) order payment by the carrier or other purchaser of behavioral health, substance use  
184 disorder and mental health services of reasonable costs and attorneys' fees.

185 (3) Actions for retaliation pursuant to this section shall not be subject to arbitration or  
186 other dispute resolution provisions of agreements between providers and carriers or other  
187 purchasers of behavioral health, substance use disorder, or mental health services unless the  
188 parties to an action for retaliation brought or which may be brought pursuant to this section  
189 specifically agree to submit the action to arbitration or other dispute resolution forum; provided  
190 that, all remedies available in a civil action are available in the arbitration or other dispute  
191 resolution forum.

192 (4) Nothing in this section shall be deemed to diminish the rights, privileges or remedies  
193 of any provider under any other federal or state law or regulation, or under any jointly negotiated  
194 agreement or other contract.

195 (5) All carriers and behavioral health managers shall annually notify providers of their  
196 protections under this section.

197 Section 30. Behavioral Health Insurance Review Board.

198 (1) There shall be established a Behavioral Health Insurance Contract Review Board,  
199 within but not subject to the authority of the attorney general with the responsibility and  
200 authority to review proposed jointly negotiated contracts or contracts determined by an arbitrator  
201 pursuant to the joint negotiation provisions of section 28 of this chapter in order to determine  
202 whether the proposed contract promotes the availability of quality behavioral health, substance  
203 abuse, and mental health services. The Board shall have 9 members: the secretary of the  
204 executive office of health and human services, or a designee, who shall serve as chairperson; 3  
205 members appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be a representative from the division of  
206 insurance, 1 of whom shall be an organization advocating for access to behavioral health services  
207 for children and 1 of whom shall be a representative from the Mental Health Legal Advisors; 3  
208 members appointed by the attorney general, 1 of whom shall be a health economist, 1 of whom  
209 shall be an advocate for substance abuse treatment, 1 of whom shall be a representative from the  
210 National Association of Social Workers; 3 members appointed by the treasurer, 3 of whom shall  
211 be representatives from different behavioral health advocacy organizations. No appointee shall  
212 be an employee of any licensed carrier or behavioral health manager authorized to do business in  
213 the commonwealth. All appointments shall serve a term of 3 years, but a person appointed to fill  
214 a vacancy shall serve only for the unexpired term. An appointed member of the board shall be  
215 eligible for reappointment. The board shall annually elect 1 of its members to serve as vice-  
216 chairperson.

217 (2) All carriers and behavioral health managers shall file annually with the Behavioral  
218 Health Insurance Review Board a document setting forth, by plan or insurance product and  
219 geographic region, the names, business addresses and emails of all providers of behavioral

220 health, substance use disorder and mental health services with whom it has contracts, and the  
221 number of covered lives, by geographic region and age.

222 SECTION 5. This act shall take effect on October 1, 2018.