

## LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

CHF has supported several bills introduced in the Illinois General Assembly that advance children's access to mental health in schools, communities and treatment resources. We are proud of having worked diligently to create and maintain positive working relationships with both sides of the aisle. These bills include:

**HB 3975**, sponsored by Rep. Jonathan Carroll to eliminate the use of seclusion & restraint in schools. *Signed into law.*

**HB 3498**, sponsored by Rep. Deb Conroy to require insurance cover costs of telehealth, including mental health services.

**HB 2944**, sponsored by Rep. Barbara Hernandez to create the Mind Strong Initiative, which involves statewide education on mental health.

**HB 212**, sponsored by Rep. Deb Conroy to provide mental health education in elementary and secondary schools. *Signed into law.*

**HB 113**, sponsored by Rep. Jonathan Carroll to establish standards for providing mental health support services for college students.

**SB 3501**, sponsored by Sen. Heather Steans to create the Behavioral Health Workforce Education Act to increase the amount of practitioners in Illinois.

**SB 2910**, sponsored by Sen. Laura Fine to create a task force

**SB 2945**, sponsored by Sen. Laura Fine to require insurance coverage for medically necessary mental health care.

**SB 2944**, sponsored by Sen. Doris Turner to increase hourly wages for disabled employees in certain workplaces.

**SB 2740**, sponsored by Sen. Laura Fine to require insurance coverage for mental health treatment and improve network adequacy.

**SB 2595**, sponsored by Sen. Laura Fine to mandate mental health parity in insurance coverage. *Signed in law.*

## LEADERSHIP



From left: Molly Stamer, Christine Walker, Michelle Sheedy, Sen. Fine, Chuck Lawless, Eric Fridman and Dave Walker. Not pictured are BethAnn Beasley and Linda Burkley.



## BENEFACTORS

Our work would not be possible without the generosity of our benefactors. We are humbled and grateful for their support and remain committed to being outstanding stewards of their resources.

The Carolus Family Charitable Gift Fund  
The Rettino Family  
Cassandra Swon  
Linda Harvey Burkley  
Chuck and Jennifer Lawless

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2020 - 2021



## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

As the world makes its way back to pre-COVID life, the Chasing Hope Foundation has taken the time to reflect on our origins and mission. Emerging from the global pandemic has only reinforced our resolve to support families and strengthen relationships. Our entire team has put this time of reflection to good use.

The state of children's mental health in Illinois remains grim. Over the past two years, hospitals have closed their child & adolescent inpatient psych departments. Providers of exceptional residential care have closed their doors, narrowing options for families more than ever before.

School districts have to tell families that there are no appropriate, in-state boarding options for their children; for those students fortunate to have a place that is the right fit for them, taxpayers spend on average \$202,000 per student, per year. One school district in northern Illinois has spent over \$3 million on out-of-state therapeutic boarding schools for a handful of students in one year alone.

To date, over 300 children in Illinois remain in psychiatric facilities BMN (beyond medical necessity), simply because there are – literally – no other places for them to live. Waiting lists for appointments with mental health clinicians average months, not days. We must do better.

We have had tremendous conversations with potential partners in expanding our mission beyond Illinois. Therapeutic providers in two other states have expressed interest in joining us in supporting families raising children with autism and related brain disorders. As we continue exploring possible ways in which we can reach beyond our borders, you will be among the first to know. You're invited to stay up to date on our many exciting projects on our website, Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram.

Our need for connection with one another has never been more evident, or essential. I'd like to recognize our incredible Board of Directors for their selfless efforts and unique insight. Their contributions to our work are without equal and make our work possible. And to our many benefactors, a sincere thank you for trusting us to translate your support into meaningful outcomes.

The best is yet to come!

*Eric Fridman*

Eric Fridman  
Board President

## WE'VE BEEN BUSY

Despite the pandemic, we have engaged with fellow stakeholders in improving quality of life for families raising children with autism & related brain disorders.

Over the past two years, we have been involved with organizations in the children's mental health space and stayed involved in their efforts. Participating when possible, we have attended events, spoken with leaders, promoted specific efforts and kept up to date on activity related to our mission.

We believe that authentic engagement with policy makers is the only way to bring about progress. Below is a partial listing of the organizations with which we are in regular contact:

- Illinois Mental Health Summit
- Mental Health America, National, State & Local chapters
- NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness), National, State & Local chapters
- SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- US Department of Education, Office of Special Education
- Illinois State Board of Education

## POLICY UPDATE

As a 501c3 organization, CHF is not allowed to participate in partisan activities, such as endorsing a candidate or contributing to a political campaign. However, any entity with non-profit status is permitted to weigh in on legislation, which is a matter of policy and not politics.

As such, CHF actively monitors public policy efforts related to children's mental health, special education, community-based supports, residential options, access to treatment, insurance coverage and any other issue of importance to the families we serve.

In December 2021, CHF was invited to testify as an expert witness at a joint hearing of the Illinois Senate Committee on Behavioral and Mental Health and the Illinois House Committee on Mental Health and Addiction.

The hearing was called by committee chairmen Senator Laura Fine (9th) and Representative Deb Conroy (46th) to address the issue of Illinois' lack of residential options for children. Specifically, Illinois does not have enough placements for children living with complex mental health concerns.

*From left: Sen. Laura Fine, Sen. Sara Feigenholtz, Rep. Deb Conroy, CHF Founder Christine Walker and Rep. Maurice West.*

