SPAN
Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide

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October 21, 2026
The Honorable Cindy F. Friedman, Chair
Joint Committee on Health Care Financing
Massachusetts General Court
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

Support for S.718, An Act Eliminating Cost Sharing for Certain Behavioral Health Services

Dear Chairwoman Friedman and members of the Massachusetts State Senate Committee on Health Care Financing,

Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN) is writing to express our support for Massachusetts Senate Bill S.718, *An Act Eliminating Cost Sharing for Certain Behavioral Health Services*. Substance use disorder is a significant public health issue that affects individuals, families, and communities. Although effective treatment can support recovery, financial barriers may prevent individuals from accessing necessary care. S.718 seeks to address this issue by eliminating patient cost-sharing for covered substance use disorder treatment services (Massachusetts General Court, n.d.).

The proposed legislation would eliminate cost-sharing requirements for a broad range of substance use disorder treatments, improving affordability and access to care.Cost-sharing refers to the portion of healthcare expenses that patients must pay, such as copayments, coinsurance, and deductibles. By reducing these out-of-pocket expenses, S.718 will make treatment more accessible to eligible patients. The bill would also limit certain preauthorization requirements under qualifying state employee health plans (Massachusetts General Court, n.d.).

Reducing out-of-pocket costs is important because treatment expenses create barriers for individuals seeking care. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, approximately 48.5 million people aged 12 or older in the United States had a substance use disorder in 2023, but many did not receive treatment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2024). Financial concerns hamper access to treatment, particularly when care requires multiple appointments or specialized services. By eliminating cost-sharing for covered treatments, S.718 could reduce these financial barriers and help

eligible patients access the care they need. The legislation would also complement existing Massachusetts behavioral health coverage requirements (Massachusetts General Court, n.d.).

If enacted, S.718 could strengthen Massachusetts' response to substance use disorder by helping eligible patients access treatment across multiple levels of care. We respectfully urge the Massachusetts General Court to support and advance S.718 as a meaningful step toward a more accessible and equitable behavioral health system. Access to substance use disorder treatment should not be unnecessarily limited by a patient's ability to pay out of pocket. By reducing this financial barrier, Massachusetts could help more individuals access appropriate treatment and pursue recovery.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

Jiyafarheen

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Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN)

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