Via Electronic Mail

January 17, 2022

Honorable Aaron M. Michlewitz, Chair
Honorable Ann-Margaret Ferrante, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House
24 Beacon Street, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

Re: S. 2584 An Act Addressing Barriers To Care For Mental Health

Dear Chair Michlewitz, Vice-Chair Ferrante, and members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Nurses Association Massachusetts, Inc. (ANAMASS), we wish to convey our organization’s strong support for S. 2584, An Act Addressing Barriers To Care For Mental Health, and our willingness to assist in its successful implementation.

Mental health issues are prevalent within almost every care delivery site in which our professional colleagues practice, and most often there is no ability to access the care needed at the time. As we learned from the last comprehensive health care bill enacted by the Legislature, with its focus on cost containment and prevention, the right care delivered at the right place at the right time provides the highest quality care most efficiently.

For probably four decades, mental health services have been decimated. The move from state hospitals to the communities never fully provided the necessary resources to deliver and manage mental health care needs. In addition, pharmaceuticals were seen as replacements for therapy and other programs, so access to payment for mental health care was reduced, as were payments for clinical services. Over time it has diminished the mental health workforce, left people seriously underserved, left individuals and families at times unsafe, and as recognized in this bill, left other systems in our society caring for patients in inappropriate settings which are an ultimately greater cost to us all e.g., hospital boarding, police departments, criminal justice system. This bill is recognition of some of what has happened, and it cannot be passed soon enough.

Many ANAMASS members have spent years working in the mental health system of the Commonwealth, both public and private. We would welcome the opportunity to provide input and answer questions about the specifics of this bill.

Thank you for all your hard work in addressing so many of these critically important issues in health care delivery.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne M. Hancock, DNP, RN, NE-BC
President, ANA Massachusetts
president@ANAMASS.org
617-990-2856

Carmela A. Townsend, DNP, MS/MBA, RN
Executive Director, ANA Massachusetts
ctownsend@ANAMASS.org
617-990-2856

C: Sen. Michael Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways & Means
   Sen. Cindy Friedman, Vice Chair, Senate Committee on Ways & Means
   Sen. Julian Cyr, Chair, Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use & Recovery
   Rep. Adrian Madaro, Chair, Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use & Recovery