

New Beginnings Therapy & Healing, LLC

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Hello and thank you to everyone that has taken the time out of their busy schedules to read and allow my voice to be heard. My name is Yakitta Renfroe, and I have been the owner of New Beginnings Therapy & Healing Inc. (NBTH) for the last four years. I have had the opportunity of supporting clients in their mental health journey for almost 15 years. We are a small mental health behavioral practice with six clinicians and two administrative staff members. We are proud to have two clinics providing care for families and individuals in Colorado. We are designated as a group/independent provider and approximately 90% of our clientele is Medicaid. We are a part of COMBINE.

I am writing this statement to show my support for COMBINE's advocacy to push a much-needed focus on the BIPOC population who are served by Medicaid. This group of individuals has gone unnoticed and unserved for far too long; it is time for change.

NBTH is elated to know that the change is beginning now! Our mission and values superseded this notion to remain quiet, and we're committed and loyal to this underserved population, even when the legislatures that be did not appear to hold the same sentiment. As a Black woman, business owner, Veteran, mother, and Christian from NJ that struggled with mental health, I know firsthand the deficit. Our BIPOC

clients feel heard, validated, and understood to seek out treatment that for years was a taboo within our community. The pandemic, although tragic, was a breakthrough for the BIPOC population. In a June 2019 study from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, it showed that, “15% of Black individuals seriously considered suicide, compared to 8% of White clients.” There not only was a critical need, but a demand to support an overlooked, traumatized, and misunderstood population. We were on overload to provide care, as many clients in this population shared that they needed a BIPOC clinician and continued to struggle to find someone that looked like them and had shared experiences.

We have heard time-and-time again from our BIPOC population that they were tired of being judged by White therapists, or stereotypes/assumptions by someone who claimed to be “woke” or in need of being a “white savior” or misunderstanding the trauma related to police brutality and the fear of being a population that no one cared about. It is microaggressions such as those statements that either pushed the BIPOC population away from therapy or encouraged them to have a louder voice to advocate for someone that knew them on a level that they did not have to explain.

And so, we endured. We stayed the course with the lower pay rates, with the confusion, with the administrative hardships and inconsistency of Medicaid. And then came the recoupment letter stating that we owed \$17,000 for the ethical work we had already provided. This letter caused fear, besides claims not paid out, and feelings of projected fraud and terminating contract threats. Our administrative staff worked diligently with Medicaid staff to have prior authorizations in place and implement the many changes that were requested.

COMBINE advocates worked tirelessly, giving up clinical time, personal time, and supervision time, to successfully help pass SB 22-156 that supported therapists and clients, limited recoupments, and prohibited prior authorizations. COMBINE continues to fiercely advocate for a long-standing stabilized mental health provider community and to increase awareness of racial, social, and economic injustices for the BIPOC people. To do otherwise is the epitome of injustice when the knowledge, testimony, and request has been presented.

I hope and pray that COMBINE's sentiment will support the heart and morality of the clinicians who choose to serve and focus on the care of the clients and providers. There is a clear-cut need for this funding to "Be The Change That You Wish To See In The World," -Mahatma Gandhi

Sincerest,

Yakitta Renfroe, MA, LPC, Owner NBTH
Board Chair, COMBINE