

Boston Liberation Health Testimony: Opposing Proposed Mandated Reporting Changes

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Boston Liberation Health (BLH), a group for healthcare workers and users committed to addressing the structural and institutional flaws in our healthcare system and to fighting for and creating alternative forms of social organization and healthcare that promote a just distribution of resources and the liberation of all peoples from current productive processes that put profit before human needs. BLH is submitting testimony to strongly oppose the changes being proposed by the Mandated Reporter Commission.

Even without the implementation of these proposed changes, mandated reporting is already fraught with racism and classism. As examples, from 2000-2011, one in seven Black children and one in nine American Indian children were removed from their homes, compared to one in seventeen white children; the majority of reports of neglect are a result of poverty, and over 50% of Black children have been the subject of a child maltreatment investigation¹. Changing regulations to include that mandated reporters also report on simply suspicions of abuse and/or neglect would only further the number of reports made against poor and working class People of Color (POC) families, by encouraging mandated reporters to rely more on their gut instincts of suspicion that are frequently influenced by racist and classist bias. Increasing fines and penalties for mandated reporters who do not report would again only further encourage providers to rely on these internalized biases and increase reports against poor and working class POC families. In addition, these changes would lead to understandable further distrust of service providers. Changing the definition of neglect to no longer exclude exceptions for challenges due to poverty and/or a disability would also only further enhance the punishment and criminalization of individuals and families living in poverty and/or with a disability, as opposed to providing adequate resources so that the child's and family's needs are met. All of these changes would increase the racism, classism and ableism already embedded in the mandated reporting system.

It is also important and relevant to consider the larger picture of racial justice and overlapping considerations about funding. There has been increased public critical discussion happening about other oppressive systems of institutionalized racism, from the criminal legal system to the immigration system, including criticism around the vast amounts of funding poured into policing and prisons, and critical analysis around policing and mass incarceration's roots in slavery and slave patrols. In comparison, little attention has been paid to mandated reporting and family regulation systems, such as to how more money is spent on the child welfare/family regulation system than on WIC, the Children's Health Insurance program or SNAP, or to how the racism embedded in our current systems of family monitoring is not incidental and overlaps with the history of family surveillance, control and separation in this country, from the separation of families during the time of slavery to the removal of about two-thirds of American Indian children

¹ Movement for Family Power, "Whatever They Do, I'm Her Comfort. I'm Her Protector:" How the Foster System Has Become Ground Zero for the U.S. Drug War," June 2020. [Link to Report](#)

from their families by the 1970s². While it is relatively widely known that the U.S has the largest rate of incarceration, it is less widely known that the U.S. has the greatest number of children who have forcibly been made orphans³. In the same way that there is a movement and pressure to move funding and resources away from policing and prisons and into community-based efforts to support health and safety, we also need to be thinking about ways to decrease the funding and power of family regulation systems and redirect funds and efforts into resources that support children and families directly, as opposed to efforts that further criminalize and control primarily poor POC families. The changes proposed by the Mandated Reporter Commission would enhance racism and classism and further the control, criminalization and separation of poor families of color, and would potentially lead to additional funding for such efforts because of the increase in reports that would happen. For these reasons, Boston Liberation Health is strongly urging that the proposed changes by the Mandated Reporter Commission not be approved.

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² Movement for Family Power, "Whatever They Do, I'm Her Comfort. I'm Her Protector:" How the Foster System Has Become Ground Zero for the U.S. Drug War," June 2020. [Link to Report](#)

³ Movement for Family Power, "Whatever They Do, I'm Her Comfort. I'm Her Protector:" How the Foster System Has Become Ground Zero for the U.S. Drug War," June 2020. [Link to Report](#)

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