

Operation Hope, Inc.
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**2/21/07 Public Hearing
Public Health Committee
Testimony in Support of *Bill Number 5631*, AN ACT CONCERNING STATE
SPENDING ON COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Operation Hope, Inc. works with those individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in the greater Bridgeport area. We serve over 600 households yearly in our shelter, pantry, community kitchen and community outreach programs. We do this through providing innovative solutions to homeless which includes, but is not limited to providing supportive affordable housing to those in need.

I am writing today in support of Bill Number 5631 because the Governor's Budget contains insufficient funds for moving forward with the Medicaid Rehab Option (MRO) and a successful adult mental health treatment system under the MRO is not possible without the support of two key budget priorities:

- 1) Enact Community Investment and Fair Rate Methodologies for the Medicaid Rehabilitation Option
- 2) Enact Changes in the Medicaid Spend Down Threshold

Bill # 5631 focuses on the first priority and accomplishes the following:

- Establishes rates for community mental health services covered under the MRO through a cost-based methodology which provides for annual cost of living increases.
- Provides DMHAS with the same appropriations for community mental health services for the fiscal year ending 6/30/08, and each subsequent year, as received for the fiscal year ending 6/30/07, including annual COLA adjustments.
- Allows DMHAS to retain appropriations to protect the capacity of their providers to serve their communities while transitioning to MRO services.
- Allows DMHAS funded providers to serve those who are on Medicaid spend-down or are not Medicaid eligible.
- Provides non-Medicaid services that are essential to sustaining healthy, community based living arrangements for the DMHAS population.
- Utilizes remaining funds to support initiatives and supports that prevent hospitalization and institutionalization of the DMHAS population.

Please support this bill and the mental health treatment providers and consumers of our state. Too many promises have been broken already. Any changes to the system must be made with the proper resources and planning. Your efforts on this matter are appreciated and you should feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.

Thank you.