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Testimony Public Health Committee
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My name is Harriet Warner. I live in East Hampton, CT and am a registered voter. I am here to talk about the universal health care coverage program for Connecticut. I feel that mental health services are vital to any health care reform in this state.

Studies have shown that mental health services are vital because one in three persons will suffer from some type of psychiatric illness in their lifetime. Psychiatric disability should and must be treated with the same parity respect and caring as other illnesses. Unfortunately in this state and country a person with a psychiatric disability is not treated with the same respect, dignity and level of care. This must change. Don't weaken Medicaid as it exists now.

When a person decides to seek out help for mental health issues there are several hurdles to overcome, one is that private insurance does not give adequate coverage. Many people that I have talked to who have private insurance have found it difficult to access services and if they do access services and they need respite or certain community supports the insurance is not there, the cost is too high and many end up declining services or being hospitalized.

When a person is a Medicaid recipient the waiting list to receive services is a minimum of 3 to 6 months. People get discourage because they can't access the services when needed. The final hurdle is that the Medicaid reimbursement rate is too low and too long. This is why it is vital to have universal health care coverage in Connecticut. People need to be proactive in the treatment of mental health and physical health because they go hand-in-hand. It is cheaper and easier to use a proactive approach than to wait and react after a crisis happens. People in Connecticut deserve good health coverage. It is not a privilege but a right. I implore to create a comprehensive universal health care program. People when they are health are more willing to work, pay taxes and live life to the best of their ability. When you have good health coverage this is a win-win situation for the people, the legislative and the state budget. Again I will reiterate that good health care coverage is a right and not just a privilege for the wealthy. Please continue to fight for good health care coverage. Thank you for listing to me today.