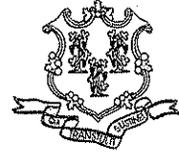




DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
TESTIMONY
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
MARCH 16, 2007



H.B. No. 6921 AN ACT CONCERNING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

The Department of Children and Families offers the following comments regarding H.B. No. 6921 AN ACT CONCERNING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH.

We would like to thank Rep. Sayers for her leadership in the area of behavioral health for children and families and her participation on the Behavioral Health Partnership (BHP).

Section 3 of this bill establishes a two-year pilot program areas of the state that have been designated by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration as health professional shortage areas, medically underserved areas or areas with medically underserved populations, and have experienced hospital emergency department overcrowding issues. This pilot program would be funded at a cost of \$500,000 for FY 08.

While we concur with the direction of this pilot study, we would point out that the financial resources are not currently budgeted. The goals articulated in this legislation are within the purview of the Behavioral Health Partnership and are consistent with the future direction of the BHP, although it may not be achievable within the timeframe of the next fiscal year.

As you know, Public Act 05-149 created the Behavioral Health Partnership between the Department of Social Services and the Department of Children and Families to develop and implement an integrated behavioral health system for children and families enrolled in HUSKY A and B, as well as for children enrolled in DCF's voluntary services program, and other children and families that DCF serves. The goal of the Partnership is to provide access to a more complete, coordinated and effective system of community-based behavioral health services and supports. The Departments remain committed to making enhancements to the current system of care in order to improve access, quality, and individual outcomes.