



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

A HEALTHCARE SERVICE AGENCY

M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

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COMMISSIONER

Testimony of Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Ph.D., Commissioner Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Before the Government Administration and Elections Committee February 20, 2008

Good morning, Sen. Slossberg, Rep. Caruso, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I am Dr. Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and I am here this morning to ask for your support of **S.B. 204, An Act Concerning Access to Certain Public Records**. This bill would allow an exemption under the Freedom of Information statutes for the personal information of certain employees of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The requested language would be similar to the exemption that currently exists in statute for DCF and DOC employees, but would be limited to those DMHAS employees who provide direct care.

As many of you know, we are a health care agency and, as such, we operate a wide array of outpatient, inpatient and residential services throughout the state for persons with psychiatric disabilities and/or substance use disorders. Some of the individuals we serve have, in the past, requested personal information on DMHAS employees and then utilized that information, as an example, to make harassing phone calls to the home of a member of their treatment team with whom they felt dissatisfied, or other instances of inappropriate activities regarding the home addresses or home phone numbers of other DMHAS employees.

We know that this issue has been before you in the past, and I understand that this may not rise to the same level as other issues before the Committee at this time. However, the pattern of people having access to the personal information of DMHAS employees and then using that information to make staff members somewhat uneasy has not stopped, and so we ask you to please support this legislation. I would also like to point out that some of these individuals come to us from DOC or DCF where the protections I am asking for currently exist.

Let me also state that when we are attempting to hire nurses and other health care professionals, it would greatly help our recruitment efforts if we could tell candidates that DMHAS would treat their personal information in the same way as it would be treated by the Department of Children and Families or the Department of Correction. It is very difficult for us to recruit for some of these direct care positions, so every little bit helps.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee on this matter. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.