THE CONNECTICUT PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

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February 26, 2008

We are writing to you as co-chairs of the Legislative Committee of the Connecticut Psychological Association (CPA) to urge you to support House Bill 5617, *AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF AND MAKING REVISIONS TO THE CHARTER OAK HEALTH PLAN.*

CPA strongly supports Bill 5617, Section 2 (d), which specifically states that the scope of benefits within the Charter Oak Health Plan (COHP) includes mental health care coverage. We believe that access to mental health care *must* be included in any and all plans to cover the uninsured. Individuals with chronic mental illness deserve the same protections, and right to access to the COHIP, as any other Connecticut resident. This is a matter of fairness.

As psychologists in private practice, we receive a lot of calls from individuals looking for mental health services and are aware of the devastation people experience when they discover that their insurance plan does not cover such services. This is especially heartbreaking when one considers the courage it takes to make these calls, which are often the first, and sometimes only, chance for early intervention. If an individual comes away from a call for help feeling let down by the system, then we as a society may have lost our chance to prevent further decline and to assist this individual. Mental health benefits are too important to sacrifice for what amounts to negligible costs. Mental health care is preventive care.

We are aware that there is public money to fund this plan and believe such funds must be spent for the benefit of all, regardless of one's medical or mental health condition. Furthermore, it is well documented that the costs of including mental health care are minimal and offset the costs of further care that result from lack of early intervention and treatment.

CT has been a leader in promising mental health parity for our residents and we urge you not to allow legislation that would weaken or threaten our current parity laws, and to support legislation that upholds them. Thank you in advance for taking our position into consideration. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us. CPA is happy to be a resource to our state legislators.

Respectfully,

Barbara S. Bunk, PhD & Christine H. Farber, PhD

Clinical Psychologists and Chairs, CPA Legislative Committee