



14 Sycamore Way, Branford, CT 06405
(203) 483-2630
www.harborhealthservices.org

PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

Re: Raised Bill No. 5729, an Act Authorizing Bonds of the State for Harbor Health Services, Inc.

Roberta Cook - - President/CEO, Harbor Health Services, Inc.

Representative Widlitz, and Public Health Committee members, I am pleased to provide written testimony today to urge you to pass this important legislation to authorize the issuance of bonds of the state in amounts not to exceed five hundred thousand dollars to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services for the purpose of providing grant-in-aid to Harbor Health Services, Inc. for the purchase of a new facility that will provide services to adults with serious and persistent mental health or substance abuse disorders.

HHSI is designated by DMHAS as the Local Mental Health Authority for the towns of Branford, East Haven, Guilford, Madison, North Branford and North Haven and has been providing comprehensive community based behavioral health services- regardless of clients' ability to pay- to these communities for more than 27 years. Each year our services grow, and with that our client base and staff numbers both increase, since 2000 the average increase in client enrollment per year is 15%. From a two person operation in 1981, to a 90 person organization in 2008, HHSI is expanding at an enormous rate of speed, we've outgrown our facility, and our current space is inadequate.

HHSI currently owns a 13,000 sq ft building and rents 7,500 sq ft building on the same street, both of which are at maximum capacity. All available room is maximized; clerical support staff are doubled up in small offices, case managers squeezing eight people into two office pods, clinicians are sharing space where appropriate, and group therapy taking place in the conference room because our three group rooms cannot handle the volume of clientele coming to the clinic.

HHSI is working with a local developer and has located property available in Branford that will be able to accommodate a 32,000 sq ft building that will house all HHSI programs in one space. The property is on Route 1 and subsequently on the bus line making HHSI programs and services more accessible. The new property will also allow for separate entrances and distinct spaces for different programs, creating a more comfortable environment for mental health and substance abuse clientele.

A local bank is willing to finance 75% of the project, but as a small community-based agency, primarily funded by grant dollars that may not be used for capital expenditures, HHSI has no means to raise the remaining 25% of the cost and sincerely needs your help to ensure that the needs of our community continue to be met.

We urge the Public Health Committee, the legislature and the executive branch to approve the issuance of bonds of the state in amounts not to exceed five hundred thousand dollars to DMHAS for the purpose of providing grant-in-aid to Harbor Health Services, Inc. for the purchase of a new facility that will provide services to adults with serious and persistent mental health or substance abuse disorders.

HHSI Programs Currently On Hold Due to Lack of Space

- Expansion of substance abuse treatment program
- Computer learning center for vocational clients
- Expansion of skills groups for case management clients, social rehabilitation clients and vocational clients.
- Expansion of peer-based programs for substance abuse and mental health clients