

Connecticut Psychiatric Society

*District Branch
American Psychiatric
Association, Inc.*

Statement in Opposition to

House Bill 6674 - An Act Concerning Workforce Development and Improved Access to Health Care Services

Public Health Committee

March 16, 2009

Good afternoon Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Dr. Victoria Dreisbach. I am a past President of the Connecticut Psychiatric Society, attending forensic psychiatrist for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services at Connecticut Valley Hospital, and a registered nurse. I am here today on behalf of the 800 members of the Connecticut Psychiatric Society in opposition to House Bill 6674. As psychiatrists we are especially concerned about removing the requirement of collaboration between APRNs and physicians.

In psychiatric medical training, we learn that a psychiatric diagnosis can be made only when all other medical causes that could explain psychiatric symptoms have been eliminated. In addition, there are numerous potential dangers of psychiatric medications especially to children and the elderly. Medications for the treatment of mental illness are among the most potentially dangerous drugs.

While we have the utmost respect for APRNs, we do not believe that their education and training prepare them to safely practice independently especially in the mental health field. It takes four years of medical school (which includes 4000 hours of clinical training), and four years of psychiatric residency training (which includes internal medicine and neurology) to prepare psychiatrists to practice independently. The journey from medical school to the bedside is at least eight years and many psychiatrists go on to complete specialized fellowships. There is no other training and education that can prepare one to independently practice medicine.

We have worked with the Connecticut State Medical Society on gathering names of psychiatrists who will collaborate with APRNs. Many of our members already do so. Every time we have been asked we have been able to provide the names of several psychiatrists willing to collaborate. If there is a problem with how collaboration is working, let's try to fix it rather than taking steps that will jeopardize the health of our citizens.

We respectfully request that you do not pass House Bill 6674.

For more information, please contact:

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