



Good Morning, Chairman and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Domenique Thornton, I work for the Mental Health Association of CT, Inc., (MHAC), and a 100-year old private non-profit dedicated to service, education and advocacy for people with mental health disabilities. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of HB 1121 An Act Concerning Mental Health Parity and the Administration of the Charter Oak Health Plan. The mission of the Mental Health Association (MHAC) is to provide quality services and compassionate relationships that engage, instruct and inspire persons with serious and persistent mental illness. Through education and advocacy, we empower people to new understandings and actions so that they feel hope, acquire ability, and find meaning in their lives. In all our interactions with customers, stakeholders and each other we provide the same level of service and quality we would expect from healthcare providers treating our own family-members or ourselves. People with serious and persistent mental illness can have a life in the community and avoid the expensive and restrictive hospital or institutional care formerly provided by the state. Mental Health Parity makes it possible to have a successful life in the community by ensuring that persons with serious mental illness receive the same level of services for mental health as for physical health in their healthcare. The Charter Oak Health Plan should comply with the state mental health parity law that requires this of all insurance policies issued in the State of Connecticut. Recently Connecticut was recognized by NAMI as a leader in this area. Make Connecticut proud of the compassionate care it provides for the people of this state and keep mental health parity as an essential component of any healthcare plan. Thank you.