

Connecticut Psychiatric Society

*District Branch
American Psychiatric
Association, Inc.*

**Statement concerning the
Proposed Elimination of the Office of Healthcare Advocate
Regulation and Protection Subcommittee of Appropriations**

February 9, 2009

This statement is being submitted on behalf of the members of the Connecticut Psychiatric Society in opposition to the proposed elimination of the Office of the Healthcare Advocate.

We understand the need make tough decisions during this bleak economic time. However the elimination of the Office of Health Care Advocate (OHA) is one cut that we cannot understand at all. If saving money is the Governor's goal, the elimination of OHA will do nothing to further that goal. As legislators are well aware, the state does not fund OHA's \$1 million budget; instead it is funded by a levy on the insurance companies. This fee will not simply go into the general fund if OHA is eliminated but will be credited back to the insurance companies.

OHA provides a tangible benefit to Connecticut citizens. This is especially true in the case of treatment for psychiatric illness, where the barriers to reimbursement can be simply too much for those who are dealing with devastating illness themselves or in their family. The insurance process is often a difficult and bureaucratic nightmare especially for those who do not know the "system". Most people never appeal a denial because they either don't know about the process or can't figure it out. Those who do appeal often complete countless forms and paperwork, jump through hoops and then are left bewildered and disgruntled because instead of

focusing on getting well, they are worried about securing coverage for their care. OHA has helped to take the “nightmare” out of the process for thousands of people over the years. The existence of this office speaks volumes about the legislature’s recognition of the problems people face. The elimination of OHA will speak volumes also. This is an office that works for people, quietly, diligently, and energetically, and which is funded, as it rightly should be, by the companies that are directly involved in the delivery of these services to citizens.

We are hard pressed to think of a valid reason why an agency which serves the people at no cost to the state would need to be eliminated. We hope that this Committee does not let the Governor eliminate OHA.

For more information, please call:

**Harold Schwartz, MD, Legislative Chair
Jackie Coleman, Executive Vice President
Melissa Dempsey, Government Relations**

860-243-3977