

Good evening members of the Regulation and Protection Subcommittee:

My name is Jody Rowell. I am a Clinical Social Worker and Advocate for the families and children of Clifford Beers Guidance Clinic which provides mental health services to nearly 2,500 children in Greater New Haven.

When I began my career in at Clifford Beers, 100 percent of my time was to be devoted to direct clinical services. It was not long before it became clear to our agency that a good percentage of direct service was beleaguered by our fighting the insurance companies to receive payment for services properly authorized and provided. I am relieved to tell you that because of the creation of CT Behavioral Health Partnership most of my time is not consumed by combating insurance companies for unfair practices.

Unfortunately that is not the reality for most consumers of healthcare. Though Beers Clinic currently provides services almost entirely to HUSKY clients, not a day goes by when I don't receive a call from a parent who reports that there is no mental healthcare access in the state for their child who has commercial insurance. They report calling the insurance companies who provide them with a list of providers who either are not taking patients or who never return the call. Essentially, the consumer is paying for a service they are not able to access.

These are some of the 7,500 consumers who were eventually referred to the Office of the Healthcare Advocate in the last 4 years. The numbers of children, families and individuals who for one reason or another cannot make it through the quagmire of managed care to find a provider or to fight unfair denials for care are most assuredly going to grow.

It makes no sense to remove the only advocate and support these families have, especially since the Office of the Healthcare Advocate saves over \$5 for individuals and families for every \$1 it spends. And that dollar is not even out of the taxpayer's pockets. I

I respectfully ask the Committee to consider the impact the Gov's proposal would have on our citizens if we were to do away with the only healthcare advocate it has to protect them especially in this very volatile environment. Thank you.