Connecticut
Psychiatric
Society

District Branch
American Psychiatric
Association, Inc.

Statement concerning

Senate Bill 990 – An Act Concerning Expanding the Husky Formulary

Public Health, Insurance & Real Estate, and Human Services Committees
March 2, 2009

The Connecticut Psychiatric Society submits this statement in opposition to Senate Bill 990 – An Act Concerning Expanding the Husky Formulary.

Senate Bill 990 would remove the exemption that mental health related drugs currently have on HUSKY's Preferred Drug List (PDL). This mean that mental health related drugs would be placed on the state's PDL and be subject to prior authorization, which would greatly restrict access to desperately needed psychiatric medication for children and adults.

It is very difficult to restrict access to psychiatric medications for a vulnerable population without seriously harming their care. Until now, drugs for the treatment of mental illness were not placed on the Preferred Drug List and therefore were not restricted. This is important because the complex nature of many mental illnesses makes it often necessary to try several medications before finding the one that benefits a particular patient. Sometimes a drug is prescribed that is effective, but side effects prevent continuing it. A new medication must then be introduced slowly, and the old one tapered off gradually. This process may have to be repeated several times. Frequently, a combination of 2-3 different medications is necessary.

We know that psychiatric patients are not the only ones who will be affected by all budget cuts. Many who are chronically ill with other types of illnesses will face the same hardship. We ask you to think about whether that is what we in Connecticut want to sanction. Even with the severity of budget cuts that are necessary, we need to take care of these people. Not only is it the compassionate thing to do. If they become sicker, no longer have the chance to lead productive lives, and require more care, what have we saved?

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