



*District Branch
American Psychiatric*

Statement concerning

**An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations
Concerning Social Services**

February 10, 2010

The Connecticut Psychiatric Society, which represents almost 800 psychiatrists in Connecticut, submits this statement in objection to provisions of the Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Social Services.

We are most concerned with Section 33 (f), which subjects non-preferred drugs to prior authorization. Restricting access to psychiatric care and medications for a vulnerable population will seriously harm their care. Barriers to access such as the new restrictions on psychiatric medications for patients on SAGA and Medicaid, new co-payments of up to \$15 on Medicare Part D plan participants, and the ceasing of the Medicare Part D wrap around coverage are seriously undermining the mental health care of some of Connecticut's neediest patients.

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. In such cases, 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. The loss of the Part D wraparound and the new co-payment of \$15 on Medicare Part D plan participants are other instances where we would be penny-wise and pound-foolish. How are people who are now getting medications through this program going to get them in the future? These are the sickest of our population. The lack of continuity in treatment will lead to recurrence of psychosis and depression and hospitalization. In some cases, it will significantly increase the risk of suicide.

In conclusion, we know psychiatric patients are not the only ones who will be affected by 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. If they become sicker and require more care, what have we saved?

For more information, please call:

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

One Regency Drive, P.O. Box 30, Bloomfield, CT 06002
Telephone: (860) 243-3977 Fax: (860) 286-0787