

Connecticut Psychiatric Society

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

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

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DSS Budget

Good evening, chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Paul Desan, and I am the President of the Connecticut Psychiatric Society. The Connecticut Psychiatric Society is the chief professional organization for psychiatry in the state of Connecticut, representing over 800 psychiatrists. Advocating for optimum care for the people with mental illnesses is our core mission.

We are deeply distressed to hear of several proposed changes in the budget which would drastically restrict access to medications for many of our patients. Patients on Medicare/Medicaid receiving medications through Medicare Part D will now be required to pay copayments of up to \$15 and the Governor is proposing to raise these co-payments even further to \$20 per month. An even more drastic proposal will require copayments for all Medicaid patients. Another recent and compounding change eliminates coverage of medications not in an individual patient's Part D plan, coverage formerly provided for patients with Medicaid or ConnPACE, which is already causing significant barriers to medication access. Now the Governor also seeks to remove protection from re-authorization for medications on which patients have been stable, protection which was recently passed by the legislature.

Individuals recovering from psychiatric illness are often limited in resources, financial and otherwise. The elderly and disabled are disproportionately represented. These copayments and limitations of coverage will greatly disrupt their mental health care. These changes will result in poorer outcomes and increased use of emergency services and psychiatric hospitalization. Experience in other states has demonstrated many times over that such medication access barriers save little money, and produce increased expenses that greatly outweigh any savings. We are disappointed to see these unsuccessful approaches proposed for our state.

As psychiatrists we are aware on a personal and daily basis of the effects of such limitations in medication coverage. These limitations will not only harm patients but result in a net increase in costs to the state. We urge you to reverse the harmful medication policies passed in the fall, and to preserve critical benefits for mental health care in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Paul Desan, MD, PhD
President
Connecticut Psychiatric Society
One Regency Drive
PO Box 30
Bloomfield, CT 06002