

LEGISLATIVE TESTIMONY

**Appointment of Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN as Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
March 2, 2010
Connecticut General Assembly**

Good Afternoon, Senator Looney, Representative Janowski and Distinguished Members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee.

My name is Joan Pesce, and I am President/CEO of Morris Foundation, Inc., a private, non-profit behavioral health treatment center in Waterbury. It is an honor and a privilege to be here today to speak in support of the nomination of Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN, as the new Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Ms. Rehmer's healthcare education, broad work experience in hospital and community-based programs, and leadership abilities unquestionably qualify her for the position of Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

I have had the opportunity to work closely with Pat on two Steering Committees for major DMHAS initiatives during Pat's tenure as Deputy Commissioner. One Steering Committee focused on co-occurring mental health and substance use disorders; the other focused on gender responsive treatment in DMHAS' women's specialty programs. In both committees, work needed to be done with providers, with other state department partners, and with clients and consumers. This was my first exposure to working with Pat, and I was extremely impressed with her knowledge of both mental health and substance abuse issues and her strong recovery orientation. She demonstrated an understanding of the challenges facing private non-profit and state operated programs alike and helped develop solutions that were reasonable for providers without compromising quality services for consumers. Pat also was aware of the need to collaborate with other state partners whose services touch the lives of the people in the DMHAS system. Her ability to work cooperatively across state department lines helped our committee broaden the reach of both initiatives and assisted other departments in understanding the need for

co-occurring mental health and addiction treatment services as well as gender responsive services in the programs they fund.

As Deputy Commissioner of DMHAS, Pat Rehmer also had responsibility for implementing the federally funded Transformation Grant and for overseeing the DMHAS state hospital system. In both areas, Pat's leadership skills and understanding of the clinical and operational aspects of the DMHAS system were unmistakably evident. Her numerous responsibilities speak to a work ethic that is second to none. Her close work with Commissioner Kirk has also prepared her for the political and financial challenges that face us during these critical times of shrinking resources and increased demand for services. Through all of this, Pat has garnered the respect and cooperation of her colleagues at DMHAS and other state departments, behavioral health providers, clients, consumers, and family members.

While Pat's professional abilities and accomplishments are impressive, her personal attributes are equally impressive. Above all, Pat has a deep passion for the health and well-being of all individuals DMHAS serves. Pat possesses an openness that welcomes people to share ideas and work together to find solutions. Her integrity and sense of dedication to the mission and vision of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services as a recovery-oriented healthcare system make her an ideal person to lead the Department into the future as a national leader in cutting-edge behavioral health services. I enthusiastically support her nomination as Commissioner.