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**Testimony on House Bill 5244: AAC The Issuance of Emergency Certificates By Staff Of The  
Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services Program**

**Submitted By: Stephen A. Karp, MSW**

The National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut chapter is in support of House Bill 5244 and urges its adoption in the 2010 legislative session.

In Connecticut approximately two-thirds of all mental health services are delivered by clinical social workers. Clinical social workers are trained in biopsychosocial dysfunction, disability and impairment of individuals and in Connecticut are recognized for the diagnosis and treatment of such disorders. This training, when added to the specialized training required in this bill, makes licensed clinical social workers fully qualified to issue emergency certificates.

Clinical social workers are often the first responding mental health provider to a child or youth in the community facing a mental health crisis. In cases where the minor is in such a level of crisis that they are a potential threat to themselves or others it becomes critically important that the minor be evaluated in a timely manner at the nearest emergency department. This bill will allow a properly trained licensed mental health clinician, including clinical social workers to issue an emergency certificate that authorizes and directs the minor to be taken to a hospital for a medical examination.

Authoring a minor to be taken to the hospital, whether or not the guardian consents, is a decision that is not to be made lightly. At the same time, if that minor is in crisis to such a degree that such certification is in the child or youth's best interest, it does not make sense to have to delay the certification because the responding clinical social worker or other mental health provider, who is capable of determining the need for a hospital evaluation, is not authorized to issue an emergency certificate. This bill resolves that problem and assures that there is not an unnecessary and potentially dangerous delay in having minors in crisis properly evaluated. Furthermore, having to involve police in the certification may be more traumatic to the minor as these decisions are clinical in nature, not issues of law enforcement.

We urge the Human Services Committee to favorably report this bill out of committee.