STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

M. Jodi Rell
Governor

Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN
Commissioner

Testimony of Patricia A. Rehmer, M.S.N., Commissioner Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Before the Human Services Committee March 2, 2010

Good morning, Sen. Doyle, Rep. Walker and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. I am Patricia Rehmer, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and I am here to speak on the following bills before you today:

- **HB 5328 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING SAGA HOSPITAL RATE INCREASES,**
- **HB 5232 AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE OF RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME PATIENTS**
- **HB 5243 AN ACT CONCERNING SOBER HOUSE**

HB 5328 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING SAGA HOSPITAL RATE INCREASES
While this proposal speaks to SAGA rates set by DSS we wanted to remind the committee that DMHAS sets the SAGA rates for hospitals providing inpatient psychiatric and substance use care. DSS has statutory oversight of the SAGA medical program while DMHAS has statutory oversight of the SAGA Behavioral Health Program, which includes hospitals. We would however, also like to point out to the Committee that the DMHAS budget for this program is currently in a deficit of approximately 2 million dollars without any proposed hospital rate increases. Given the current budget situation, we would not be able to support this bill at this time.

HB 5232 AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSFER OR DISCHARGE OF RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME PATIENTS. DMHAS supports this bill before you. It allows individuals with disabilities that live in residential care homes to select advocates to represent them if the residential care home that they are currently residing in wanted to transfer or discharge them. We have worked with many individuals in recovery who are peer advocates and believe they should be allowed to represent the interests of the individuals in need.

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HB 5243 AN ACT CONCERNING SOBER HOUSES This legislation before you would require all sober houses to have a manager and to register with DMHAS. DMHAS currently funds approximately 171 beds in 21 sober homes across the state. The DMHAS funded homes have to meet certain certification requirements and one of those requirements is to have a house manager. However, the majority of sober homes which have been in existence in this state for years have no relationship with DMHAS. DMHAS has no way of determining where they are located or how to find them. For years, people in recovery have opened their homes to other individuals in recovery to offer housing and supports in a sober environment. This model has been an effective tool in supporting sustained recovery for individuals with substance use disorders. We however would have no way to determine where these homes exist and how to make them comply with registration. We understand that some towns have not had a positive experience with some of these homes and when it is determined that the home in question is one that is funded by DMHAS, we have responded and made changes. We believe that the town's zoning officers, fire marshals and building inspectors are they best people to guard against the concerns raised by local officials. We would ask that the Committee not act favorably on this bill.

Thank your for your time and attention. We would be glad to answer any questions you may have at this time

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