CONNECTICUT
HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Friday, March 12, 2010

SB 402, An Act Concerning The Behavioral Health Partnership

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of **SB 402, An Act Concerning The Behavioral Health Partnership.**

SB 402 expands the responsibility of the Behavioral Health Partnership (BHP) to (1) include the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the BHP, (2) allow the BHP to expand coverage to include SAGA medical services recipients, Medicaid recipients, and Charter Oak Health Plan members, and (3) enable the BHP Oversight Council to review behavioral health services available under the Charter Oak Health Plan.

CHA supports the expansion of the BHP to the adult populations served by SAGA, Medicaid, and Charter Oak. The BHP has had successes with children that we believe could be replicated in adult populations. From the hospitals' perspective, the main strength of the BHP is its emphasis on developing community services and ensuring that clients connect with these services, helping to prevent inappropriate hospitalizations.

Connecticut's hospitals are committed to providing excellent services and the quality of patient care is a paramount concern. Toward that end, hospitals attempt to ensure that patients are not in an inappropriate healthcare setting and are discharged as soon as appropriate. We often find the network of community services for the adult population deficient, resulting in longer than necessary hospital stays for SAGA, Medicaid, and Charter Oak clients with mental health diagnoses frequently come to emergency departments and are admitted as patients. With appropriate care coordination, provider incentives, and access to community services, we believe these clients would best be cared for in the community.

CHA believes that SB 402 could be strengthened by stating more explicitly in the first section that the BHP is being expanded to include SAGA, Medicaid, and Charter Oak populations, rather than the expansion occurring at the discretion of the Commissioners of Social Services, Children and Families, and Mental Health and Addiction Services.

We appreciate your consideration of CHA's opinion.

For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.