We Rebuild Lives

TESTIMONY OF

HOSPITAL FOR SPECIAL CARE

SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATIONS

COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 2, 2011

HB 6380 An Act Concerning The Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2013

The Hospital for Special Care (HSC) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning HB 6380, An Act Concerning The Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2013.

This testimony is provided in support of Sec. 27 (Effective July 1, 2011) a bill appropriating $125,000 in funds for the Department of Developmental Services, for Pilot Program for Autism Services, in section 1 of public act 10-179. The purpose of these funds shall be to study issues related to needs of persons with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012, including the feasibility of a Center for Autism and Developmental Disabilities.

Hospital for Special Care (HSC), has studied this population over the past several years and most recently conducted an independent needs analysis to determine gaps in service for this population. Clearly research documents that ASD incidence rates continue to increase dramatically. Most recent incidence rates indicate that 1 in 100 children or 1 in 70 males are diagnosed with ASD. Most recent statistics indicate that over 5000 children under age 21 have been diagnosed with ASD. Although some of these individuals may progress to independence, many will need ongoing care and support.

Thankfully, Governor Malloy recognizes this significant issue. His pre-election policy statement on Autism specifically noted that Connecticut's most compromised children must go out of state to receive appropriate and costly treatment for the serious behavioral issues sometimes exhibited by individuals affected with ASD. In sending these children out of state, we stress family units while sending money and jobs out of state.

HSC submitted a white paper to the Malloy Healthcare Working Group outlining the results of its needs analysis and proposed approach to closing the gaps in service for this challenged population.

HSC proposes to develop three major components of the overall continuum of services for ASD, namely (1) a diagnostic and evaluation service for young children, (2) an outpatient medical service built on a medical home model, and (3) a short-term intensive inpatient service for those children who are at risk due to self-injurious or aggressive behaviors. The goal of each of these programs is to enable these children to live safely in the community.

The second component is the provision of primary medical care and coordination of specialty care in a medical home model. These services and the assessments completed would also be utilized to assure coordination between educational, vocational, medical and family support teams.

The third component proposed to be developed at HSC is a pediatric behavioral inpatient unit for individuals on the Autism spectrum and/or with significant developmental disabilities. The program would be modeled on HSC's successful and unique inpatient neurobehavioral program. Currently, these children are being placed out-of-state in psychiatric settings that often do not provide programs dedicated to their specific needs.

We see Governor Malloy's passion for properly caring for these children and their families as an opportunity to merge our ongoing efforts with his vision. We believe with the support of the State, we can create an exemplary program, which will provide three essential components on the continuum of services for people with ASD and their families in a manner which we believe will reduce costs over the long run and create jobs today. Together with the State, we can fulfill Governor Malloy's promise and commitment to these young citizens.

All too often, both government and the health care industry engage in the costly and time-consuming endeavor of duplicating efforts. In this instance, however, we all can avoid that. At a time when revenues and resources are scarce, and at the outset of a new State administration that has vowed to change the way Connecticut does business, both Hospital for Special Care and Governor Malloy find themselves uniquely able to work together to help solve the serious problem of caring for one of our State's most vulnerable segments – children affected with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

In closing, we offer our support for the completion of a feasibility study for Autism services. We have worked closely with DDS, have created and conducted an Advisory Group and have researched models of excellence for the treatment of Autism. We are willing to be involved immediately to support this initiative.