



KEEP THE PROMISE COALITION
 Community Solutions, *Not* Institutions!
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**Testimony before the Select Committee on Children
 February 8, 2011
 In Opposition to SB 198**

Good morning/afternoon Representative Urban and members of the Select Committee on Children. My name is Dr. Eric Arzubi; I am a physician and serve as Co-Chair of the Children’s Committee of Keep the Promise Coalition, or KTP. The Committee represents a broad coalition of stakeholders in child mental health from around the state, including families, clinicians, school professionals, and advocates, among others.

KTP is dedicated to ensuring that a comprehensive, community-based mental health system is created and maintained in our state; however, our members also recognize that every Connecticut child who struggles with a serious mental health crisis deserves access to high quality, in-state inpatient hospital care for stabilization and treatment planning.

Connecticut’s children are currently experiencing a mental health crisis:

- Over 100,000 children in our state do not have access to the appropriate mental health services they need and deserve.
- 1 in 14 Connecticut high school students reported attempting suicide last year – that is 1 or 2 students in every classroom.
- Connecticut’s child mental health care system is fragmented and has gaps along the continuum of care – from prevention to intensive inpatient care.
- Connecticut sends nearly 400 children and \$35 million out of state because of these significant gaps in services.

Closing Riverview Hospital will exacerbate Connecticut’s child mental health crisis. There are precious few child mental health resources in Connecticut – closing another facility without a comprehensive and “bullet-proof” plan for adequate alternatives for these struggling children and their families is irresponsible and will likely lead to more children being diverted out-of-state.

Connecticut children already have very poor access to rigorous inpatient treatment for chronic and persistent serious mental health problems. Children stuck in emergency rooms due to behavioral problems will likely be diverted in larger numbers to out-of-state facilities – away from critical family and community support systems.

Over ten years ago, Connecticut abruptly closed adult inpatient hospitals without investing in appropriate and necessary community-based mental health systems of care. **Those decisions hurt patients and communities across the state** - without proper supports, many people ended up homeless, floundering in nursing facilities, or tangled in the criminal justice system. **We cannot afford to repeat this mistake with Connecticut's children.**

We must keep Connecticut taxpayer money in Connecticut and work with DCF to build a continuum of mental health services for children that spans the home, school, and community. We must bring our children – those nearly 400 children placed in out-of-state facilities – home.

Thank you for your time. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.