



*Service, Education, Advocacy*

**Contact: Domenique Thornton at (860) 529-1970 extension 11**

Good Morning, Chairman and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Domenique Thornton. I am the General counsel and Director of Public Policy for the Mental Health Association of CT, Inc., (MHAC). MHAC is a 100-year old private non-profit dedicated to service, education and advocacy for people with mental health disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you why I support Senate Bill 852 An Act Concerning Supportive Housing Initiatives. This initiative updates the role that DMHAS already has to support individuals in a creative and supportive housing model making individuals more independent of costly institutional services for life saving support. This initiative puts the force of law behind a concept that has worked successfully in the past and should be replicated as a model to leverage federal, local and private resources. Many persons get stuck in an institutional revolving door that prevents them from having productive lives in the community with appropriate services. With the appropriate level of services, persons with severe and persistent mental illness can recover, live with hope, improve their lives and thrive in the community. .

For over 100 years, Connecticut has maintained a well-intended system of institutional care for persons experiencing serious and persistent mental health disabilities. Ten years ago, the state closed two of its three psychiatric facilities and promised to provide community services to support people released from institutional care saving the state millions of dollars. The alternatives for people with very low income and with chronic illnesses are extremely limited. Even those who do not want to go back to the institutional environment, fail without the supportive services ending up in an expensive revolving door. Last year the state was able to close another state hospital. I think you should also consider that up to 20% of the prison population may be able to successfully and more economically benefit from community support. Please consider housing as one of the most effective public health care expenditures you can make. Housing provides the stability upon which all mental as well as physical health recovery depends. Vulnerable people with chronic diseases recovering from substance abuse and psychiatric disabilities **Please give this excellent policy, the force of law by passage of Senate**

**Bill 852. It will also help rebalance state Medicaid dollars to cost effective community service which is a state priority for humanitarian as well as economic reasons. Thank you.**