



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN
Commissioner

**Testimony by Patricia Rehmer, MSN, Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Before the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs
March 1, 2011**

Good morning, Sen. Slossberg, Rep. Hennessey, and distinguished members of the Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs. I am Patricia Rehmer, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and I am here today to testify on **H.B. 6480 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IDENTIFICATION OF CONNECTICUT VETERANS ELIGIBLE FOR BENEFITS FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

While DMHAS recognizes the need to coordinate information across agencies and to make use of existing federal resources wherever possible we would ask that you consider adding language to this bill that follows state and federal confidentiality laws as well as protect private health care information that individuals may not want to share.

The proposal before you would require DMHAS share client specific information with the Department of Veteran Affairs about the veterans that we serve so that the DVA can explore other dollars for services. While we do ask individuals receiving care from DMHAS about their veteran's status, we cannot share that information with other agencies unless the individual has given us permission to do so.

Many people need to be encouraged to access psychiatric and substance abuse treatment services out of fear that doing so might impact their career. Because there is still an incredible amount of stigma that holds people back from seeking such assistance, anything that threatens the confidentiality of the clinical relationship does not serve the individual or society very well, and it could keep some veterans from asking for and obtaining help. For this reason, and to comply with federal and state statutes, we ask that language be included that would allow for the person seeking services to give permission before we share information that identifies him or her as a person seeking psychiatric or substance abuse treatment services.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I would be happy to take any question at this time