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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A HEALTHCARE SERVICE AGENCY

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Testimony of Patricia A. Rehmer, M.S.N., Commissioner Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Before the Commerce Committee February 21, 2012

Good morning, Sen. Le Beau, Rep. Berger and distinguished members of the Commerce Committee. I am Patricia Rehmer, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and I am before you today to speak in support of **HB 5105 AN ACT CONCERNING THE JOB EXPANSION TAX CREDIT PROGRAM AND INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING CERTAIN SERVICES FROM THE DEPARTMENTS OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**. I want to thank the committee for your assistance in raising this proposal.

HB 5101 amends the Jobs bill that was passed in the special session last October by modifying the tax credit for employers that hire individuals with disabilities served by the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) to include those individuals with disabilities who are served by the DMHAS and DDS employment programs. It is important to note, this bill would not raise the cap on the Job Expansion Tax Credit Program or otherwise seek additional funding. Rather, this bill is simply intended to broaden the use of the tax credit to include DMHAS and DDS clients. I will speak to the DMHAS employment programs in my testimony.

A recovery-oriented system of care maximizes individuals' opportunities for establishing, or reestablishing, a safe, dignified, and meaningful life in the community of his or her choice. For many of the individuals we serve, housing, social connections, and employment are fundamental to their recovery. In keeping with this theme, DMHAS has and continues to invest many of our dollars in community services and supports that keep the individuals we serve in appropriate but less expensive inpatient hospital beds. We have over \$9.9 million invested in our employment programs operated by our private not for profit providers. They serve over 3,000 individuals every year and are successful in placing about 40% of the people served in jobs.

Although DMHAS employment services are linked with those of BRS in numerous ways, very few of our clients with serious mental illness are served by BRS. BRS employment services generally require greater self-direction from consumers than DMHAS' and therefore are best matched with individuals who have work histories. DMHAS' employment services focus early on in people's recovery, helping individuals enter/re-enter the job market and begin building recovery capital.

Individuals served by DMHAS' employment services who are looking for work may be at a disadvantage if an employer knows that a tax credit follows certain persons with disabilities who are job ready but not others. This bill would level the playing field for individuals served in our system and hopefully be a useful tool for employers that are interested in hiring.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this proposal.