



Testimony before the Public Health Committee March 7, 1012
SB 55, AA Expanding the Membership of the P and T Committee
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Senator Gerrantana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dominique Thornton. I am the General Counsel and Director of Public Policy for the Mental Health Association of Connecticut, Inc. (MHAC). MHAC was established in 1908, the first private nonprofit dedicated to service, education and advocacy for people experiencing mental health disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to testify in support of SB 55, AA Expanding the Membership of the Pharmaceutical and Therapeutics Committee to include a child psychiatrist. Known as the P & T Committee, this body makes important decisions concerning classes of medications that are available for use on the state's Preferred Drug List (PDL). Persons experiencing mental health conditions require the greatest latitude of medications from which their treatment providers can choose for their greatest therapeutic improvement. This is especially so in children. Early diagnosis and medical treatment are important because they are effective in children who need individual treatment plans involving a combination of medication and individual therapy, family therapy, and specialized programs (school, activities, etc.). Psychiatric medication can be helpful to relieve many of the symptoms and problems identified. Child and adolescent psychiatrists have broad training in multiple areas of development and developmental psychopathology. Their bio-psychosocial knowledge can be

¹ "Bio" refers to biological, including physical health and genetic factors. Psychotropic medications affect biological factors by altering the levels of chemicals in the brain that help to regulate the activity of neurons (brain cells) that determine emotions and behavior.



used most effectively as an integral part of the ongoing assessment and treatment process including pharmacological management.

Psychotropic medicines have proven to be effective for the purpose of improving the emotional and behavioral health of a child or adolescent diagnosed with a mental health condition. Overall, the use of psychotropic medications in children and adolescents has been increasing over the past 20 years, as evidence to support effectiveness when used appropriately has increased. Prescribing psychotropic medications for children and adolescents requires a competent prescriber, optimally a child and adolescent psychiatrist, with training and qualifications in the use of these medications in this age group.

Just as parents need to ask their family physician or pediatrician to refer them to a specialist in child and adolescent psychiatrist who is specifically trained and skilled at evaluating, diagnosing, and treating children with mental illnesses. The P and T committee needs the expertise of a child psychiatrist to assist them in their evaluation of the effectiveness and necessity of medications required for maximum therapeutic benefit in children and adolescents. Many youth can benefit from psychotropic medications used as part of a comprehensive treatment plan. Treatment with psychotropic medications allows these youth to remain in their homes and schools and make best use of community treatment interventions and natural supports. A child and adolescent psychiatrists having greatest expertise on the use of psychotropic medications, to promote clinical standards for effective pharmacological therapy, including the use of evidence-based systematic assessment and symptom-rating tools and the use of evidence-based pharmacological interventions will certainly be a benefit to the P & T Committee.