

**Testimony Regarding Raised Bill 6608
An Act Concerning an Integrated System of Care**

**Jeffrey Walter
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Good afternoon, Senator Slossberg, Representative Abercrombie, and members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Jeffrey Walter. I am President and CEO of Rushford Center, a non-profit behavioral health care organization and partner in the Hartford HealthCare system. I also serve as a co-chair of the CT Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council. I am here to testify regarding Bill 6608, An Act Concerning an Integrated System of Care.

This bill would require the Oversight Council, working in cooperation with the Departments of Social Services, Children and Families, Public Health, and Mental Health and Addiction Services, to conduct a study of the current system of services that address the social, emotional, psychological, psychiatric and behavioral health needs of state residents. The bill also calls for the Council to present recommendations to the General Assembly, based on its findings, for providing integrated services or expanding access to care, including the public investment needed to do so.

The Partnership and its oversight council were established under PA 05-280 to increase access to quality behavioral health services for Medicaid recipients by expanding community based care, reducing unnecessary institutional care, and maximizing federal revenues. The Council is comprised of all stakeholders including legislators, providers, consumers, advocates, and state agencies. Great strides have been made in reaching our mutual goals; nonetheless, all would agree that much remains to be done. There is abundant evidence that many Connecticut residents, of all ages, are in need of behavioral health services but unable to obtain them. Barriers exist to the early identification of at-risk individuals and to the successful referral to the right type of care, when people are identified. So, the Council welcomes the opportunity presented by Bill 6608. However, such an expansive study would require resources far beyond those currently available to support the Partnership, and the Council itself. We would be happy to work with the Committee to determine the cost of conducting the study.

Thank you.

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