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Testimony

Human Services Committee – Wednesday March 5, 2013

SB 1026 AN ACT CONCERNING AN ADEQUATE PROVIDER NETWORK TO ENSURE POSITIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR LOW INCOME RESIDENTS

Submitted by Barry Kasdan Pres & CEO Bridges...A Community Support System Inc.

Good afternoon Senator Gayle Slossberg, Representative Cathy Abercrombie, Chairs, and members of the Human Services Committee.

I am here today to support SB 1026. I am the President and CEO of a behavioral health agency that serves thousands of poor and at risk adults and children. Bridges is a member of the Connecticut Community Providers Association.

As a community based behavioral and healthcare provider we see firsthand the struggles and challenges that confront those in urgent need of mental health and substance abuse services. Here in Connecticut accessing help is becoming more difficult and frustrating. We face a pending crisis with the Governor's proposed budget that would strip away all grants from the DMHAS budget, for all levels of care that are Medicaid reimbursable, with the expectation that the Affordable Care Act will fund services for an additional 50,000 people in 2014. Current Medicaid rates for mental health and substance abuse services cover around 50% of costs. In short the current system and its resources are inadequate to meet the pending surge of new recipients and sustain services for current recipients. It's a system already in crisis with no active strategy or planning to meet the historic upheaval the system will face in 10 months.

The existing provider network struggles to offer timely services to current Medicaid recipients, and the expansion of Medicaid will exacerbate this problem. SB 1026 creates a Commission to study the obstacles to an adequate provider network and make recommendations to improve access and outcomes as well as ensuring that Medicaid services are adequately funded. This study is critical in assuring that our system is sustainable going forward and meets the needs of Connecticut's people.

We strongly urge the committee to favorably report this bill. Given the proposed cuts coupled with the pending changes and reorganization in Connecticut's healthcare industry, the proposed Commission is essential for planning and implementing intelligent and compassionate policy and services that assure access to quality care for those most in need.

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