



Office of the  
Healthcare  
Advocate  
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

**Testimony of Victoria Veltri  
State Healthcare Advocate  
Before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee  
In support of SB 1088 and SB 1091  
March 12, 2013**

Good afternoon, Representative Megna, Senator Crisco, Senator Kelly, Representative Sampson, and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. For the record, I am Vicki Veltri, State Healthcare Advocate with the Office Healthcare Advocate (“OHA”). OHA is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans; and, informing you of problems consumers are facing in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

I applaud the committee’s initiative in promoting the concept behind SB 1088. OHA has long been aware of the gross disparity in treatment of mental and substance use disorders. As you are aware, we held a hearing in October 2012<sup>1</sup> about barriers to access that highlighted all of the issues that this proposed bill intends to study. In addition, the Program Review and Investigations (“PRI”) Committee also conducted a detailed investigation of a part of this problem, Access to Substance Use Treatment for Insured Youth, which identified significant problems and proposed several important recommendations, many of which have been included in additional legislation currently under consideration. PRI has also expanded the initial scope of the study, with a more comprehensive report expected to be released within the next month.

In addition, the Mental Health Services Working Group of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children’s Safety has recommended the creation of a task force “to conduct a

comprehensive study of Connecticut's mental health system and make recommendations for enhancements to the mental health system for 16-25 year olds."<sup>2</sup> The scope of this recommended task force will encompass each of the elements addressed in SB1088. Finally, many of the proposed initiatives in SB 1088 are already within OHA's authority. We also anticipate participating in the ultimate work of the task force, consistent with our mission.

SB 1091 also addresses a significant problem surrounding court ordered treatment. OHA has been aware of this issue for some time and has initiated a dialogue with juvenile court staff to attempt to mitigate this concern. We have found that, in many cases, what would be a covered service under a member's commercial plan is denied solely because it was court ordered, irrespective of any subsequent clinical affirmation. This seems inconsistent with public policy as well as the consumer's needs since, by the time a person's underlying mental illness has progressed to the point that the criminal justice system becomes involved, they clearly are in need of treatment.

Given the comprehensive nature of the proposed task force to study Connecticut's mental health system, it seems likely that the concerns implicated in both SB 1088 and SB 1091 would be addressed in that forum.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to deliver OHA's testimony today. We look forward to continuing to collaborate and advocate for the consumers of Connecticut in this important matter. If you have any questions concerning my testimony, please feel free to contact me at [victoria.veltri@ct.gov](mailto:victoria.veltri@ct.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.ct.gov/oha/lib/oha/documents/publications/report\\_of\\_findings\\_and\\_recs\\_on\\_oha\\_hearing\\_1-2-13.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/oha/lib/oha/documents/publications/report_of_findings_and_recs_on_oha_hearing_1-2-13.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cga.ct.gov/ASaferConnecticut/docs/Mental%20Health%20Subcommittee%20Report.pdf>