



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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PROBATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

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Senate Ranking Member John Kissel
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Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee

From: Paul J. Knierim
Probate Court Administrator

Re: RB 6684 An Act Concerning the Establishment of an Intake,
Referral and Intervention System Relating to the Provision and
Delivery of Mental Health Services

Date: April 15, 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on RB 6684 An Act Concerning the Establishment of an Intake, Referral and Intervention System Relating to the Provision and Delivery of Mental Health Services.

The Office of the Probate Court Administrator supports the intent underlying section 1(b)(1) of the bill, which provides that staff from the Department of Mental Health and Addition Services attend hearings in Probate Courts to link individuals with mental illness with appropriate services. Such an arrangement would in many cases facilitate the recovery of a psychiatric patient after discharge from the hospital by ensuring that necessary supports are available and by encouraging the patient to take advantage of those services. Ongoing therapy, compliance with prescribed medication, housing, food, medical care, peer support, assistance in obtaining public assistance benefits and coordination among service providers are all critical services.

It is our view that mandating attendance at all commitment hearings would not be an efficient use of resources. Instead, we would recommend a system under

which a department representative would attend a hearing only when the facility that is petitioning for commitment requests assistance in discharge planning or obtaining services for a patient.

We would also point out that the Probate Courts and DMHAS are already engaged in a collaboration known as Melissa's Project, the goals of which align closely with RB 6684. Melissa's Project is a non-profit organization, funded jointly by DMHAS and the Office of the Probate Court Administrator, which provides comprehensive case management services for individuals with severe mental illness living in the community. Individuals served by Melissa's Project achieve better engagement with treatment and, as a direct result, experience marked reductions in revolving door hospitalizations, arrests and incarcerations. We are very pleased that the legislature provided funding to expand this highly effective program to serve additional regions of the state with the passage of the Emergency Certification Bill 1160, An Act Concerning Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety.