



**GILEAD  
COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC.**

**“Improving Lives, Building Futures”**

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*March 7, 2013*

*Testimony to Public Health Committee, Friday, March 8, 2013*

**HB 262 - AN ACT REQUIRING NOTICE BY PSYCHIATRISTS CONCERNING PATIENTS THAT MAY POSE A THREAT TO THEMSELVES OR OTHERS**

***Jim Probolus, Past President Board of Directors, Gilead Community Services, Inc.***

Good afternoon Chairs Gerratana, Johnson, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Jim Probolus. I have lived in Portland Ct for over 35 years and currently serve on the Board of Directors of Gilead Community Services. This agency, based in Middletown, provides high quality health and human services to almost 600 children and adults and employs over 250 people. Gilead is a non-profit agency providing a full range of programs and services to those in our community and their families who suffer from mental illness. Nonprofits as you may know serve over half a million people, and employs approximately 11% of CT's workforce.

Gilead has been a part of the public/private partnership in the Community healthcare system for 45 years. We and all the other nonprofit community providers are part of the safety net that helps people live as full a life as possible. The terrible events that occurred at the Sandy Hook elementary school go far beyond what we traditionally think about when we think of "mental health" services. They go to the heart of how as a society we regard violence, and how as a society we also regard those who may need to seek help for a behavioral health condition. We first and foremost must address the "shame and blame" from needing mental health and/or substance use treatment, and emphasizes early identification and treatment how to teach our children, our families, our citizens how to resolve conflict without resorting to violence.

I am appearing before you to ask that you consider the full impact of this act and to further elaborate on its impact by including in it the language to not only requiring notice to, "...public safety authorities when a patient is believed to be a threat to himself or herself or to other persons.", but to specify that there be programs and staffing in place to handle such referrals by

qualified community based mental health service providers such as Gilead. As indicated above Gilead has been serving Middlesex County clients and their families for over 45 years and has established itself as a respected and trusted provider of vital services to those suffering with mental health problems. Gilead provides a full range of Mental Health services and is a true safety net as clients and families transition in and out of various stages of treatment and needs, some of which require re-evaluation and reassessment to other qualified plans and programs. Some of these generate referrals by the various state agencies and may in hampered delivery of service due to unnecessary delays.

We all realize these are very difficult economic times, and money for programs is tough to come by. However, passing “feel good acts” or partial solutions does not achieve the aims for which these acts are intended to address. We need adequate funding to, and in some cases develop as well as, staff, fund and operate the programs which are getting more complex as we more fully understand the driving factors involved in identification of root causes and proper treatment to address these causes and not just symptoms.

My point is simple, Mental Health Treatment is a good Investment, The Safety Net services need to be fully funded, the services work...when they are there, and our services are good fiscal management compared to the cost of crisis and long term services.

In more detail, the State asks us to deliver services, but it often fails to give adequate funding or the backing needed to provide the services. Our clients need the services we offer in order to live productive, fulfilling and healthy lives. The services we provide are essential services. Again, I want to thank everyone for recognizing the importance of the Safety net and the need to modernize but, as we use more resources for administrative burden and increased costs of doing business, there are less direct services delivered to our clients. Without the proper addressing of funding, we risk the possibility of losing programs and services. This at a time when we are facing new challenges and mental health needs that must be addressed if we are to successfully address the dangers that we, as a society, face if mental health is not being regarded as equally important as physical health and wellness.

The community provider system is a cost effective means of providing vital services that are an integral part of the core mission of government. I am here today on behalf of our clients, the incredible staff, and hundreds of thousands of individuals served by the nonprofit community provider system to ask that you look to strengthening the community provider system as a way of addressing aspects of the growing fiscal crisis and provide needed services. I am here to tell you that we provide excellent care to our clients that save the State money and create jobs as an alternative to more costly and restrictive levels of care.

Now, is a critical moment in time, higher costs, more regulation, and the lack of state support mean program and service reductions at the very moment we should be looking for less costly

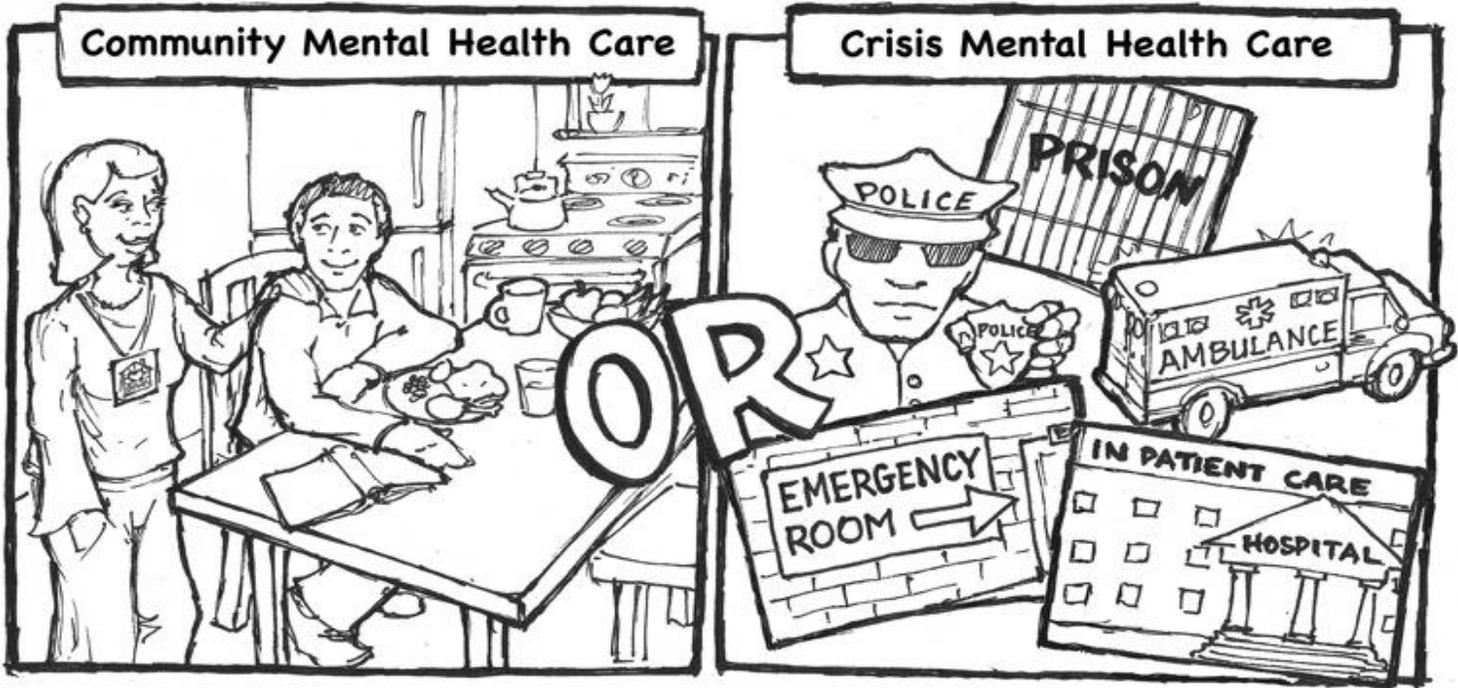
and more productive alternatives. I can say the system of care is at risk. As you know, there has been no COLA for many years for any state funded community provider contracts, coupled with decades of inadequate COLAs simply does not address our ever increasing operating costs and has forced the reduction of services. As healthcare providers our costs continue to rise and we need your help in providing relief to our already overstretched budgets. When you flat line a system of care for decades, it will flat line!

Programs have closed in the last few years and will continue to do so – this is not a false alarm. As an agency we have closed a program and made reductions in others due to the short sighted approach to state budgeting which ultimately leads to dire consequences and increased costs. We have done our fair share to help out during the budget crisis in good times and in bad.

We all know that funding issues create staffing issues. We know that when individuals with a chronic illness do not receive proper treatment they are likely to end up in emergency rooms, prisons or more expensive and less appropriate residential settings like nursing homes, thus costing the State even more money.

Nonprofit Providers are part of the solution for the future of the service delivery system and preserving the investment made in quality, cost effective, community care. We support the increased funding for discharge and diversion services, non-reimbursable costs under the Medicaid Adult Rehab Options, and increased community placements for individuals with traumatic brain injury or acquired brain injury (TBI/ABI). We thank Commissioner Rehmer for her support in ensuring that in these difficult fiscal times cuts to nonprofit providers are minimized.

Our Agency and others like us, the employees, and the clients we serve need this systemic problem fixed. Given adequate support, we have provided the needed services; which saves the State money, provides people with independence, and creates jobs.



**\$125,000/yr\* OR \$400,000/yr\***

## **MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT**

Creates More Employment

It's Smart Fiscal Management

*If there's Adequate Payment*



\*Cost per person per year for fully staffed supported apartment care vs. emergency and in-patient care.