

SB 374 AN ACT REQUIRING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ASSESSMENTS FOR CHILDREN

I am Dr. Sandra Carbonari, President of the CT Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am here today to commend you for addressing the possibility of behavioral health assessments for children. This is so important. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommendations (which I am submitting for the record. See link below.)

We hope the committee takes this opportunity to really do the right thing for all children. We should be screening children from birth into early adulthood. While we may not have all the resources in place when something is detected yet, we ought to start by screening children and help those who we can reach.

Just this week, we had a presentation at the LOB on a child pediatric/psychiatric system of regional children's mental health consultation teams designed to help primary care providers meet the needs of children with psychiatric problems. This has been working in Massachusetts, and we know it can help the children in CT as well.

We have also been meeting with advocates and with the Medicaid Medical Director, Dr. Robert Zavoski, about recommendations for developmental and behavioral screens for children insured by Medicaid. In our neighboring state of Massachusetts both Medicaid and commercial payers support age appropriate developmental and behavioral health assessments for their insured children and they believe it has made a difference.

Since this is just a proposed bill, many details need to be worked out. Such as:

- Who will administer these screens?
- Which screening tools will be approved for use?
- Will the results be part of the medical record, the school record?
- Will providers be reimbursed by public and private insurers?

We recommend that a committee of stakeholders meet very soon to come up with the recommendations for Connecticut based on the national recommendations developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics that we have attached to this testimony a link to a document that is entitled "Mental Health Screening and Assessment Tools for Primary Care." It is imperative to undertake an initiative like this carefully and deliberately, and to not let any more children fall through the cracks.