



**TESTIMONY OF
TERRI DIPIETRO MBA, OTR/L of
MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL
SUBMITTED TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
FOR THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON
COMMUNITY-BASED HUMAN SERVICES**

Wednesday March 19, 2014

My name is Terri DiPietro, and I am the Director of Outpatient Behavioral Health Services for Middlesex Hospital. I have worked in outpatient behavioral health services for 24 years and I urge you to support the adoption of Raised Bill 471. I believe strongly that many of the provisions of this bill will allow for true systems change in how we provide behavioral health services and as important, identify the steps we can take to prevent the need for high end services for our children and families.

Our hospital has been looking for avenues to provide behavioral health services in primary care offices for two years. The licensing restrictions have prevented us from providing alliances within our primary care offices and addressing the most urgent needs onsite rather than through referral. The wait time between referral and appointment often leads to worsening symptoms that than require higher levels of care. Bill 471 will allow behavioral health providers to operate under existing licensure requirements to ensure quality care while allowing providers to be in the locations where patients can most readily seek treatment in real time. It is essential that hospital based clinics also be allowed the same ability as those entities licensed under the behavioral health regulations as hospital based clinics are large providers of this level of care.

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Middlesex Hospital has been involved with the Middletown Public Schools for 5 years through a CT Health Foundation Grant developing the iCARE (Identify Children and Respond Early) model that provides for universal screening for children at risk for social-emotional problems and has identified prevention strategies to ensure children are able to be attentive and focused on academics. Yale has been analyzing our data and we have statistically valid evidence that universal screening and prevention result in improved overall functioning and reduced severity of behavioral health problems.

In the report of the Legislative Program Review and Integrity Committee dated January 31, 2014 Middlesex Hospital's involvement in the Community Care Team Model is highlighted as means to address the over use of Emergency Departments by patients with mental health and substance abuse issues. The model is simple, through the use of care coordination the team has been able to identify barriers that prevent these patients from connecting to care in the community and then a care plan is developed to address each patient's individual treatment needs. The first year the team met resulted in a 53% reduction in mis-use of the ED and the second year a 43% reduction. Our data shows that care coordination is a highly effective, fiscally prudent means of ensuring that patients are referred to the appropriate level of care and takes the extra step to ensure that obstacles to those patients engaging in treatment are identified and addressed.

I urge you to approve this bill so that the hundreds of Connecticut residents that struggle with mental health and substance abuse issues can receive the timely care they need. Thank you the opportunity to share these concerns.

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