



REAL LIFE. REAL HOPE.

March 19, 2014

**PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
SB 417 – AAC THE PROVISION OF PSYCHIATRIC AND SUBSTANCE USE
TREATMENT SERVICES**

Good afternoon. I am Alyssa Goduti, the Vice President for Business Development and Communications at CHR (Community Health Resources.) CHR is the most comprehensive behavioral health provider in Connecticut, offering a wide range of services including mental health and addiction treatment services for children, adults and families, substance use services, child welfare and supportive housing. CHR provides services through contracts with DMHAS, DCF, DSS, DPH and CSSD. We serve 16,000 individuals every year through our 80 programs, 32 locations and more than 650 exceptional staff. We have outpatient clinic sites in Manchester, Enfield, Willimantic, Danielson, Putnam, Mansfield, Bloomfield and Hartford. We believe that real life brings with it real challenges. We strive to help people find real hope.

I am urging you today to support SB 417, An Act Concerning the Provision of Psychiatric and Substance Use Treatment Services. We all know that the best healthcare addresses a person's total needs, focusing on their overall wellness and not just a piece of their health. This bill helps to address some of the administrative barriers that currently prevent more integrated care models from developing, by allowing behavioral health clinical staff to provide care in a primary care location that is "of site" of the officially licensed facility. This bill allows the behavioral health provider to provide essential services at the primary care doctor's office or another appropriate location that is not at the physical address of the DPH licensed facility.

Let me provide an example of how integration of behavioral health and primary health could work and why this legislation is so important. John visits his primary care doctor for his annual physical. During that appointment the doctor learns that John is not sleeping well and feeling sad often. John explains that he has experienced the recent loss of a loved one. His doctor talks with John about his experiences and recognizes that John would benefit from outpatient therapy to address his grief and treat what could be depression. Instead of handing John a referral slip and sending him away, he walks with John down the hall to a connected office where Maria, a CHR Licensed Clinical Social Worker is located to coordinate and provide care. John is able to sit with Maria and immediately make a connection and get help to begin the healing process. If John's doctor handed him a business card and suggested he visit the outpatient behavioral health clinic in a neighboring town, John would not have received such quick access to care. He may not have made an appointment at all.

We know that integrated care for those with co-occurring primary and behavioral health conditions results in better outcomes. Primary care physicians welcome the support of behavioral health specialists in a quick and easily accessible way. Clients benefit from an approach that promotes health and wellness of the whole-person, not a silo approach. The principles of integration are also consistent with the current healthcare reform initiatives occurring in Connecticut, including behavioral health homes, the state innovation model and the health neighborhood demonstration project.

We know that:

- Behavioral health is essential to physical health
- Prevention and early intervention are possible and necessary
- Treatment is effective
- People recover when they have the right help to get them there

We know that our services work but we need to make them as accessible as possible so that people will access care. This bill would address an administrative process that is creating barriers to integration. I ask that you please move this bill forward to allow for the provision of mental health and substance use services in doctor offices and other appropriate locations under the behavioral health provider's primary DPH license.

Thank you for your time and attention.



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