



To: Members of the Public Health Committee

From: Morna Murray, President and CEO, CT Community Providers Association

Re: Public Health Committee Public Hearing on SB-417: An Act Concerning The Provision Of Psychiatric And Substance Use Treatment Services

Date: March 19, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Morna Murray and I am the President and CEO of the Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA). CCPA represents community-based organizations that provide health and human services for children, adults, and families in multiple areas, including mental health, substance use disorders, and developmental disabilities. Our members serve more than 500,000 people each year.

I am here today to speak in support of Senate Bill 417: An Act Concerning The Provision Of Psychiatric And Substance Use Treatment Services. SB-417 promotes the integration of behavioral health and primary care by allowing community based behavioral health organizations to provide psychiatric and substance use disorder treatment services in primary and other health care settings.

Community providers believe that co-location of behavioral health services in primary care and other health care settings (and vice versa) would improve integrated care for individuals with co-occurring physical and behavioral health conditions. In fact, this is the way health and mental health care is moving in our country, as it should. Physical and behavioral health issues are quite often co-occurring.

However, current DPH licensure regulations restrict clinic practice to physical locations specifically approved by the department. There is no provision - short of full licensing of a new site - for the deployment of clinical resources from a licensed clinic to an "off-site" location.

This bill would break down barriers between behavioral health providers and primary care physicians, providing them with the opportunity to facilitate the coordination of care and the delivery of services in the most appropriate setting for the patient. Precedent for the provision of "off-site" services by a licensed clinic exists within the Department of Children and Families' licensure regulations for Outpatient Psychiatric Clinics for Children.

Integration through co-location of behavioral health services in primary and other health care settings provides improved care for individuals with co-occurring physical and behavioral health conditions, resulting in better outcomes. Considering that psychotropic medications for conditions such as depression, anxiety, and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are more commonly prescribed by primary care

CCPA

35 Cold Springs Rd., Suite 522, Rocky Hill, CT 06067 - 3165
(P)860-257-7909 • (F)860-257-7777
www.ccpa-inc.org

physicians than psychiatrists, we must act to support primary care physicians by providing them access to behavioral health specialists that can safely and effectively treat patients and to make appropriate referrals.

This bill promotes health by breaking down silos and supporting a whole-person approach to wellness and health. Furthermore, this collaborative model, in which behavioral health services are provided in the primary care setting, has been shown to reap measurable benefits in both patient outcomes and long-term cost savings, by reducing avoidable hospitalization. These principles are in line with the current health initiatives being undertaken by the state, including behavioral health homes, the state innovation model, and health neighborhoods demonstration project.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have or provide any additional information. Please feel free to contact me at 860-257-7909 or mmurray@ccpa-inc.org.