



Office of the
Healthcare
Advocate
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

**Testimony of Victoria Veltri
State Healthcare Advocate
Before the Program Review and Investigations Committee
In support of HB 5372
March 4, 2014**

Good afternoon, Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky, Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino, and members of the Program Review and Investigation Committee. For the record, I am Vicki Veltri, State Healthcare Advocate with the Office Healthcare Advocate ("OHA"). OHA is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans; and, informing you of problems consumers are facing in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 5372, An Act Implementing the Recommendations of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee Concerning the Alcohol and Drug Policy Council.

Early identification and intervention is a critical element in the effective treatment and management of substance abuse disorders and HB 5372's required assessment of professional education standards concerning screening and brief intervention ("SBI") protocols is consistent with national initiatives. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has developed and is promoting initiatives to increase the inclusion of these assessments in routine medical treatment and Connecticut, by embracing the principles of public health and prevention in this area, is at the forefront of an important reform.

HB 5372's additional proposal that the council develop and promote an effective referral entity for substance use treatment and tracking the accessibility of providers for services dovetails with the clearinghouse concept promoted in SB 322 o information and data collection on service accessibility. This recommendation creates an invaluable resource for consumers in crisis by leveraging existing stakeholder expertise to increase consumer access to needed substance use and mental health services, but it also ensures that there is ongoing real time monitoring of access.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to deliver OHA's testimony today. We look forward to continuing to collaborate and advocate for the consumers of Connecticut in this important matter. If you have any questions concerning my testimony, please feel free to contact me at victoria.veltri@ct.gov.