

HAVEN

Health Assistance InterVention Education Network



Legislative Testimony
Joint Committee on Appropriations
Governor's Proposed FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Porter, Senator Kane, Representative Ziobron and members of the Joint Committee on Appropriations, my name is Maureen Sullivan Dinnan. I am the executive director of the Health Assistance interVention Education Network for Connecticut Health Professionals, also known as HAVEN. HAVEN is the assistance program for healthcare professionals facing the challenges of physical illness, mental illness, chemical dependence, or emotional disorder. This program was created in 2007 following the passage of the enabling statute Section 19a-12a. This legislative action balanced the important public policy to encourage our medical and health professionals to access care without fear of stigma and licensure discipline with the important need to have healthy professionals providing care to others with accountability in the interests of patient safety. I thank you for the opportunity to present this written testimony to request state funding.

Our nurses, physicians, veterinarians, dentists, and allied health professionals suffer from mental health and nervous conditions at the same rate as the general population. This means that 6.7% suffer from major depression which is the leading cause of disability in the United States for individuals ages 15 to 44; 2.6% suffer from bipolar disorder with a median age of onset of 25; and anxiety affects about 19 million adult Americans. Suicide for healthcare professionals exceeds that of the general population, with female physicians four times more likely than male counterparts to suicide. It is accepted that 10 to 15% of the population will suffer from substance use disorders, including our healthcare professionals. According to an American Dental Association survey, 1.5% of dentists admitted to having an alcoholic drink before going to work; according to the American Medical Association, 2% of physicians actively practicing have a substance use disorder. Studies suggest that the numbers for nurses is even higher, as much as 6% of nurses may be actively practicing with a substance use disorder. The numbers are staggering. If we accept that even 1% of the licensed health professionals may benefit from intervention, direction into treatment, and ongoing support, it means that 1,493 professionals need HAVEN.¹

After passage of the law in 2007, HAVEN began monitoring approximately fifty professionals, including approximately 25 from a prior program which HAVEN absorbed. In 2014, HAVEN provided support and direction into treatment to more than 370 professionals. In addition, HAVEN gave resource information to an additional 70 inquiries. Since 2007, HAVEN has supported more than 750 professionals in one year, three year, or five year health and wellness contracts.

At the time Section 19a-12a was passed, funding was not requested because the goal was to demonstrate the need and benefit the program would offer the state. At this time, HAVEN submits that both need and benefit have been clearly established. Referrals continue to increase. HAVEN works collaboratively with the Department of Public Health and the Department of Consumer Protection in the interests of public health and patient safety. 85% of professionals successfully complete their individual health and wellness contract. 95% of professionals successfully return to practice within the initial year of monitoring.

However, HAVEN is attempting to meet the rising demand with inadequate staffing which now includes an executive director, administrative assistant, receptionist, three quarter time social worker and

¹ Based on the number of licensed health professionals in Connecticut in 2013 and covered under Section 19a-12a.

bookkeeper, and invaluable volunteers, including a certified medical review officer, three physician directors, one psychiatric nurse director, and fifteen medical review committee members. The program cannot be sustained on the generosity of volunteers.

In order to properly provide services, HAVEN needs a medical director, a psychiatric nurse, two full time additional social worker/case managers, and an additional administrative assistant. HAVEN also needs to expand from our current second floor location which has been provided by the Connecticut State Dental Association at a reduced rate. While we are grateful to the CSDA, our program has grown more rapidly than anticipated and we need additional private offices to ensure confidentiality and conference room space. We also need a location that is handicap accessible.

Although we charge an administrative fee to the participants in the program, this fee does not cover all our expenses nor does it support the growth that is desperately needed. In addition, the participants, who are often refrained from practice for a period of time, struggle to pay the fees which may include our administrative fees, random drug testing fees, treatment/copay costs. As with other businesses, 7% do not pay or have extreme financial hardship. 33% are in payment plans. Many allied health professionals and licensed practical nurses are the sole supporters of their families, have modest income, and the financial struggle complicates their access to services. HAVEN will not turn away any qualifying person for financial reasons and makes every effort to work with the individual, despite our own limited resources.

In order to accomplish our objectives HAVEN needs at a minimum an additional \$1,115,155.00. We are asking that the Appropriations Committee consider a \$10.00 increase to all healthcare licenses covered under Section 19a-12a and to have that sum "pass through" to HAVEN. This money would be used to fund the needed staffing positions and enable us to begin addressing facility needs. Our hope is that it would also encourage other grantors to invest in HAVEN so that we could meet our full need, including physical location and other operation needs.

HAVEN would welcome the opportunity to provide more information and continue this discussion. I would like to again thank the Committee for allowing me to submit testimony on behalf of HAVEN, the health assistance program for Connecticut health professionals and we appreciate your consideration.

Respectfully submitted:

		
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