

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

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Testimony regarding CMHC budget cuts

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It is an honor and pleasure to be here to give testimony regarding the proposed cuts to the Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC) and to respectfully request that you restore the support for clinical and research programming at CMHC. I have worked at CMHC for the past 29 years, first as a trainee and now as director of the Abraham Ribicoff Research Facilities, and I have had first hand experience with the important mission of CMHC to provide treatment of the mentally ill, to identify novel and more effective therapies, and to train mental health professionals.

It is an honor to provide testimony about this important work because we carry on a tradition of excellence in mental health research that was established over 50 years ago through the collaborative efforts of the State of CT and Yale University. This has brought together the foremost clinicians and research scientists in the country and from all over the world to elucidate the cause of mental illnesses and to develop more effective therapeutic agents. Generations of clinicians and research scientists have been attracted to this program because of the long-standing focus on elucidating the mysteries of the brain so that we can better understand mental illnesses and identify new therapeutic strategies for these difficult disorders.

The State's contribution to this collaborative effort has provided infrastructure for the clinical and research programs and funding for essential core resources that cannot be charged to federal grants. The investment made by the state is returned many fold by grants from the National Institutes of Health and by investments from Yale University. The combined clinical and research program at CMHC generates approximately 100 jobs annually that are related to clinical care, treatment, and research.

The new budget would signal an end to the successful State of Connecticut-Yale collaboration at CMHC as we know it. Elimination of \$786,000 for the CMHC research programs that supports essential core resources, would impact the 100 CMHC clinical and research staff, trainees, and researchers, and would dramatically diminish CMHC's contributions to advances in treatment. The 2015 rescissions cutting \$443,000 from the DMHAS contract with Yale would eliminate psychiatrists that provide treatment for over 500 patients and affect critical clinical programming within CMHC, limiting access to psychiatric care among low-income residents.

In summary, the proposed CMHC budget cuts would devastate its clinical treatment and research program, which has been a national model for psychiatric

health care and the study of brain disorders. These cuts would be senseless given the many fold returns in the form clinical care, treatment, jobs, Yale funds, and federal dollars that are generated from the State's investment in CMHC. It is imperative that this funding is restored to preserve the integrity of the CMHC mission.