

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

Friday, March 6, 2015

Testimony Regarding Budgetary Cuts to CMHC

Dear Committee members: My name is Luming Li, and I am a resident physician at Yale New Haven Hospital. I have had the pleasure of working with many colleagues and patients who participate in giving or receiving care at the Connecticut Mental Health Center, or better known as the CMHC.

The CMHC is a very special place. As a resident, one of the big draws for me to choosing to come to train at Yale is the robustness of the community health program here. Since starting residency, I have really seen why the leaders at CMHC have received so much praise.

Treatment of chronic psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia can be very challenging because patients not only need ongoing medical treatment, but also need food, a stable shelter, and a place to go when everyone else's doors are closed. **The CMHC provides a home for these patients**, who are under-resourced and stigmatized because of their illness. Connecticut is a pioneer in community mental health because of the CMHC, with ongoing clinical trials and research innovation that has brought new knowledge to our field. Let me just share just a few of the interesting projects I know about:

One of my mentors, Vinod Srihari, is doing groundbreaking work on early detection of psychosis at CMHC. He is working on a strategic public health advertising campaign to identify struggling young adults who do not understand their hallucinations and need help. The results of his work will have significant impact nationally. In the CMHC, there is also cutting edge neurobiological and brain imaging work. The level of collaboration here at Yale and CMHC is substantial, and difficult to achieve. **These robust research efforts are at risk with budget cuts.**

As a first year resident, I was able to ask the CMHC to help fund a resident-led education program to talk about advocacy and promote discussion on mental health related services. The program is unique in that there is a group of people from many different healthcare fields, including occupational therapy, nursing, social work, policymakers, and physicians to regularly discuss challenges. In addition, my dear friends were able to receive a grant to start an exciting research project to identify characteristics of sickest patients at CMHC. **With budget cuts, these educational projects are threatened.**

The CMHC is a place where new ideas are shared and attempted under the admirable leadership of Michael Sernyak, whose passion and commitment to patient care is truly motivating. There is a new program to integrate a primary care clinic to CMHC, so patients will not need to go far to receive medical care. Notably, there is a Hispanic clinic that reaches a diverse population of resource-poor patients. In addition, voucher programs exist to incentivize patients to get fresh,

healthy food from a farmer's market, since many of our clients also face significant physical ailments. **With funding cuts, patients will lose the most.**

Budgetary cuts will threaten the well-being of patients and truly shrink the many opportunities for growth that I've witnessed at the CMHC. I hope that the committee members can understand and support the ongoing need to excellence in community mental health. **PLEASE DO NOT CUT FUNDING TO THE CMHC.** The repercussions are substantial, far-reaching, and have long-lasting effects to those here in Connecticut and elsewhere. We are proud of the clinical work and innovative practices in our center, and want to continue doing work that saves lives. Thank you.