

**Written Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Health and Hospitals**

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Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee, it is my privilege to provide this testimony on behalf of the patients with severe mental illnesses and addictive disorders who are treated on the Clinical Neuroscience Research Unit at the Connecticut Mental Health Center and all patients who are in need of future advances in the treatment of their devastating mental illnesses.

Coming to the completion my graduate training in physiology and biophysics and my medical school training in the early 1990s, I was intent on finding the best residency-training program available that would allow me to use the rapidly expanding field of neuroscience to advance the treatment of severe mental illness. After brief conversations with my mentors and Department Chairman, it was clear that Yale was unambiguously the standout program, owing to the novel line of innovative work that was being performed at the Ribicoff Research Facilities at the Connecticut Mental Health Center.

The scientific and clinical environment was unparalleled at that time, and has remained so more than 20 years later. The Ribicoff Research Facilities allow for an unprecedented level of collaboration between basic neuroscientist and clinical researchers. These interactions and collaborations have had a tremendous impact on my career, but more importantly, on the direction the field of psychiatry is moving.

The Ribicoff Research Facilities have served as the primary training site for a large number of the leaders in the field of psychiatry, with numerous departmental chairmen and world-renowned scientist and clinicians in the ranks. The impact of these individuals on the field is demonstrated by the novel treatment strategies and methodologies they have brought to the clinics. Their impact is further amplified as they have gone on to mentor new generations of neuroscientist and clinicians aiming to improve the quality of life for individuals suffering form severe mental disorders.

My personal experience has been in the area of mood disorder research. Several large real world studies such as the STAR*D and the European Group for the Study of Resistant Depression have clearly shown the limitations of our existing treatments for major depressive disorder. While these treatments provide benefit to a majority of patients suffering with this disorder over a quarter of patients with major depression do

not achieve a sustained response with our existing treatment options. These findings provide a strong impetus for the field to develop novel approaches to treatment development based on a deeper understanding of the neurobiology underlying the disorder.

Work done here at the Ribicoff Research Facilities at the Connecticut Mental Health Center has had a major impact on our evolving understanding of the neurobiology of depression, and has led to the development of several novel pharmacological treatment strategies that are now in development by multiple academic centers and pharmaceutical companies around the world, including several companies in the state of Connecticut. At present some of these treatments, such as the use of drugs targeting the glutamatergic neurotransmitter system for the treatment of major depression, are considered among the most promising new developments in the field over the past six decades.

In summary, the proposed CMHC budget cuts would devastate the research and teaching missions of the Ribicoff Research Facilities, and significantly impair the progress of mental health treatment. For the sake of our local patients, and patients suffering from severe mental illness throughout the world who anxiously await future breakthroughs, please restore these funds.