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Testimony on SB 841: AAC The Implementation of a Comprehensive Children's Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Health Plan

**Public Health Committee
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Submitted By: Stephen Karp, MSW**

The National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut Chapter supports SB 841 as a means to maintain sufficient interest and concern on issues of children's mental health. We believe that this task force will provide much needed ongoing coordination between the numerous elements that make up the state's children's mental health services.

Following the Sandy Hook School shooting the Legislature made significant progress on addressing children's mental health. That progress however is now threatened by budget cuts and fiscal constraints on the state budget. To maintain adequate support for children's mental health there needs to be an outside body, such as the Advisory Board proposed in SB 841, to assure that the state moves forward with necessary actions, such as cataloguing services, adoption of treatment standards and protocols, ensure collaboration between service providers and to oversee the implementation plan developed pursuant to section 17a-22bb of the general statutes.

We believe that the representation of the advisory board is appropriate. We do however request that at least one of the four provider representatives be a licensed clinical social worker who works with children. Social workers provide at least two-thirds of all mental health treatment in our state so it is imperative that social work is represented amongst the appointed providers. We ask that the bill is amended to specify the inclusion of at least one LCSW of the four providers.

We do question having the Commissioner of DCF appointing all of the board members listed 1-9 under section 1. It seems to us that Legislative leadership should have part of the appointments to assure the independence of the members. We recommend that this revision be made.

We urge the Public Health Committee to move forward with this bill with revisions as noted here.