



Johnson Memorial Medical Center

**TESTIMONY OF  
JOHNSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE  
Wednesday, March 18, 2015**

**SB 1089, An Act Concerning Mental Health Services.**

**Johnson Memorial Hospital** appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 1089, An Act Concerning Mental Health Services**. Johnson Memorial Hospital supports the bill, as it addresses improvements to the mental healthcare system in Connecticut. What we need is a strong policy and a modest investment in a plan to provide care to these patients in need well into the future. Without this vision of Mental Health Services the State of Connecticut will short change those citizens who require access to quality Behavioral Health Services.

**Johnson Memorial Hospital** plays a vital role in providing all types of medical services to Connecticut residents, inclusive of behavioral health services in the North Eastern Connecticut Region. Last Year we served more than 619 Behavioral Health inpatients and 6591 outpatients. This represents an increase in volume of 30% in services to adults and adolescents that we treat for behavioral health-related conditions. Instituting this policy would strongly enhance Behavioral Health Services that our community and state so desperately need. However, we can't afford to severely cut funding for Behavioral Health Care in the State of Connecticut.

**Johnson Memorial Hospital** provides treatment for adolescents to early 60's. This is essentially thru ones' life time. These patients are chronically mentally ill, suffer from severe substance abuse, and those with co-morbid needs. Many of our patients are homeless and we treat all members of the communities served by Johnson Memorial Hospital. We also provide short-term behavioral health services until the limited State beds become available.

A patient experiencing a mental health crisis could spend days, or even weeks, in our Emergency Department ("ED") waiting for a bed in an appropriate facility, or waiting to be transitioned to the right outpatient setting, simply because there are not enough resources available to meet the constant need. Extended stays in the ED can be stressful and exacerbate a patient's condition rather than improve it. For example, **Johnson Memorial Hospital** last year had 6056 patients presenting to our Emergency Department with mental, behavioral, neurotic, and multiple complex disorders. This problem is particularly acute for children and

adolescents, for whom the need for services greatly outstrips the number of available beds and trained specialists.

In 2014, the Connecticut Hospital Association convened a Subcommittee on Mental Health comprising hospital behavioral health directors, emergency medicine physicians, chief executives, chief financial officers, and government affairs experts charged with developing recommendations to improve health outcomes, relieve the burden on EDs, and improve the adequacy of funding for key mental health safety net services. Several of these steps are set forth in Sections 14 through 22 of SB 1089.

Specifically, Sections 14 through 22 call for the development of a Medicaid shared savings model, expansion of Behavioral Health Homes, and the establishment of a grant program to provide funds to organizations that provide acute care and emergency behavioral health services. They would call for the adoption of measures to disclose and disseminate more effectively information regarding the admission criteria, admission process, and program capacity of state-funded and supported facilities and programs that offer mental health or substance abuse services. Additionally, they would call for the establishment and implementation of evidence-based quality measures. Finally, they would increase the number of Intermediate Care (ICC) beds, establish a framework to study, assess, and accommodate the current utilization of and need for hospital beds for acute psychiatric care, and raise Medicaid reimbursement rates for behavioral health services to levels comparable to Medicare.

**Johnson Memorial Hospital** encourages the Committee to support SB 1089. Our citizens of the State of Connecticut deserve the highest level of accessible Mental Health Services in the communities our hospitals serve 24/7 - 365 days a year.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

Respectfully submitted,



Stuart E. Rosenberg  
President/CEO