



**TESTIMONY
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2015
SB 1089, AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Yale New Haven Health System (YNHHS)-- Connecticut's leading healthcare system with over 20,000 employees and 6300 medical staff submits this testimony in support of SB 1089, ***AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.***

The Yale New Haven Health System, through Bridgeport, Greenwich and Yale-New Haven Hospitals, and their affiliated organizations, including the Northeast Medical Group, strives to provide access to integrated, high-quality, patient-centered care in collaboration with others who share our values. We offer our patients a range of healthcare services, from primary to the most complex care, including comprehensive psychiatric care, available anywhere in the world.

YNHHS hospital affiliates care for more than one quarter of the State's Medicaid enrollees and, last year, provided **over \$180 million in free and uncompensated care** to those who needed our services and could not pay for them. Every day, our staff cares for individuals and families who lack access to behavioral health care. Over the past 5 years, we have seen child and adolescent emergency psychiatric visits increase by 65%. In our emergency departments we provided over 5000 psychiatric assessments to children last year. Over this same period of time we have experienced a 57% increase for more than 9,000 adults who came to us for emergency psychiatric services. We offer inpatient acute psychiatric services to children, adolescents, adults and seniors who come to us from all over the state. Additionally, we offer outpatient services in more than 40,000 visits annually and have one of the largest psychology training programs in the country.

SB 1089 seeks to improve a system that is fragmented and overwhelmed. Having insurance coverage does not equate to access to services and we need to redesign the Medicaid system to enhance quality and reduce costs attributed to mental health care. We have patients who remain in our acute care setting far longer than necessary due to barriers to discharge. State agency funding cuts (implemented and proposed) have thwarted their ability to provide necessary services to their clients and our patients get "stuck" in an inappropriate and expensive setting. We need system reform and properly funded agencies.

We are proud to be represented on the state's Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council and have actively participated with our colleagues across the state to develop Mental Health recommendations under the umbrella of the Connecticut Hospital Association, many of which are included in the bill before you.

The initiatives proposed in SB 1089 will make substantial improvements to mental health services for Connecticut residents. Development of a shared savings model for Medicaid will ensure that potential cost savings will flow back to the provider system to ensure expanded access and services. Including hospitals, FQHCs and Local Mental Health Authorities in the Behavioral Health Home and Health Neighborhood initiatives will ensure a collaborative provider network in Connecticut communities. Transparent reporting of health outcome data for state owned or operated facilities and state-funded agencies will ensure the interdependent web of community service agencies will

operate effectively in coordinating care, reducing admissions and maximizing limited healthcare resources. Community care teams will provide a structure for community-based interventions to prevent avoidable psychiatric admissions and readmissions to hospital emergency departments. The study of overall bed use and need in Connecticut will ensure that we have adequate capacity for short-term acute and longer-term patient needs, particularly as the population ages and more patients are needing longer-term psychiatric inpatient services. The more effective use of EMPS services will ensure an alternative to hospital emergency department use for children and adolescents throughout Connecticut. These recommendations, combined with a comprehensive approach to opioid analgesics availability, training and education, will provide a robust improvement in mental health service delivery in Connecticut.

At Yale New Haven Health, we are committed to partnering with providers, state agencies and you, our elected officials, to better serve this most vulnerable population. Thank you for your consideration.

We need your support!