

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

Robert D. Beech, MD, Ph.D.  
Medical Director, Acute Inpatient Unit and Transitional Living Program  
Connecticut Mental Health Center  
34 Park St., 4th Floor  
New Haven, CT 06519

Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee, it is my privilege to serve as the medical director of the acute inpatient unit and transitional living program at Connecticut Mental Health Center. Our inpatient unit is a 20-bed unit that accepts patients from area emergency rooms, surrounding hospitals, and different parts of the state. The patients who come to our unit have typically been hospitalized multiple times at other area or state facilities and have failed to respond to typical treatment regimens in either an outpatient or an inpatient setting. By the time they come to us, these patients have often been to the Emergency room more times than they can count, they have exhausted the resources and patience of family and friends, they may no longer be welcome in supervised housing programs or even emergency shelters due to disruptive or dangerous behaviors. They literally have nowhere else to go.

Our inpatient unit offers specialized care to acutely ill patients with psychotic disorders, affective disorders, anxiety disorders, severe personality disorders, substance abuse and substance-induced disorders, and other mental disorders requiring the highest level of treatment. The unit provides intensive assessment and diagnosis as well as both psychosocial and psychopharmacological treatments with stabilization and referral to outpatient services. But more than that, we offer hope to patients who often feel that the world has given up on them, and in many cases have given up on themselves.

I want to share with you a comment that was sent to us by a patient who was discharged after a lengthy (1 year) hospitalization on our inpatient unit:

"I'm not sure if you recall, Dr. Sernyak, but about one month ago you had visited the 4th floor and I had approached you regarding the exceptional care I received while here. Just last week I was D/C'd after a one-year hospitalization on the 4th floor (1 year to the day). I have written numerous "You Made a Difference" recommendations however I'm unsure if everyone received their nominations. Point is--Dr. Beech along with the entire team/staff of 4th floor absolutely saved my life but more importantly helped me see that my life was worth saving. Thank you!"

My point in sharing this is not to pat myself on the back, but to say that what we do makes a difference. It makes a difference in the lives of our patients, in the lives of their families, and in the life of our community. We are not just another bed in another hospital. We are the last bastion of hope for patients who have tried and failed every other avenue open to them, often multiple times, before coming here.

Robert Frost said, "Home is the place, where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."

For the past 49 years, CMHC has been the "home" of the chronically mental ill, the patients who needed more than anyone else could provide, the patients who needed someone to believe in them, so that they could believe in themselves again. I ask to not to cut funding for CMHC, and to help us keep being a source of help and hope to our patients and to the people of Connecticut.

Thank you.