

**TESTIMONY OF DEENA TAMPI, MSN, MBA-HCA, RN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES
Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, March 18, 2015**

SB 1089, An Act Concerning Mental Health Services

Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning SB 1089, An Act Concerning Mental Health Services. *Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center* 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.

Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center plays a critical role in providing all types of medical services to Connecticut residents, including mental and behavioral health services. Behavioral Health Services include crisis, consultation and liaison, in-patient, detoxification, and out-patient services. We annually serve more than 2,457 inpatients, 2,065 outpatients, and 5,100 patients who present to the ED with mental health and substance abuse disorders.

A patient experiencing a mental health crisis could spend days in our Emergency Department (ED) waiting for a bed in an appropriate facility, or waiting to be transitioned to the right setting, simply because there are not enough resources available to meet the need. Extended stays in the ED can be stressful and exacerbate a patient's condition rather than improve it.

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 calls 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 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.

Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center encourages the Committee to support SB 1089.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.