

Testimony for the Appropriations Committee,

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Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for this opportunity to offer my views about HB 5044, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017.

It is a privilege to speak to you this evening on behalf of the treatment and educational programs at the Connecticut Mental Health Center and the vital importance of protecting budgetary support to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS).

I first came to New Haven in 1999 as a trainee and CMHC had a formative experience on my choice to become a psychiatrist in the public sector. I was attracted to the unique environment of the Center, which allowed for real engagement with underserved populations while also encouraging the development of novel, innovative programs to relieve suffering – all in a setting that prided itself on training the next generation of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. This unique public-academic collaboration would not be possible without the consistent support of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS).

For the past 10 years I have had the opportunity to develop and expand a clinical program that seeks to improve outcomes for youth with new onset psychotic disorders. DMHAS support and leadership has been vital to the birth and growth of the clinic for **Specialized Treatment Early in Psychosis (STEP)** and contributed to the growing national focus on the care of this vulnerable group. STEP has since been recognized in guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to states, and has been cited as a model of care in communications from the

National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Cassidy-Murphy Mental Health Reform Act, currently under consideration in the U.S. senate. The investment by DMHAS leadership in this work as far back as 2006, led to the development of a cost-effective clinical program that has demonstrably improved outcomes while also reducing costs related to unnecessary inpatient care, emergency room use and incarceration.

As one of the training directors of the Yale Psychiatry Residency, I understand the unique and vital role that CMHC plays in developing the next generation of psychiatrists. The training program last year attracted more than 1,000 applications for a mere 16 positions and several applicants specifically cited clinical programs at CMHC as crucial to their reason for choosing to relocate to Connecticut. Aside from physicians, the Center plays a vital role in exposing a wide variety of trainees – from nursing, social work and psychology – to the rewards of caring for our patients, and this **educational mission** adds irreplaceable value that pays for itself many times over as many of these trainees choose to take up staff positions at CMHC and arrive at their first day of work, as I did, already well oriented to the system of care and personally invested in its health and success.

In summary, the proposed DMHAS budget cuts threaten the vital clinical and educational missions of the Connecticut Mental Health Center. I believe that further cuts to an already stretched system of care will adversely impact the lives of those patients whom we serve: in the short term, by crippling programs that provide care, and in the longer term, by weakening the training experiences that are vital to the health of the mental health workforce.