

**TESTIMONY OF**  
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***Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center***  
***and Johnson Memorial Hospital***

**SUBMITTED TO THE**  
**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, February 18, 2016**

**HB 5044, An Act Making Adjustments To State Expenditures For The Fiscal Year**  
**Ending June 30, 2017**

Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5044, An Act Making Adjustments To State Expenditures For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017**. We oppose the imposition of budget cuts for mental health and substance abuse disorder treatment services. If enacted, these cuts will further destabilize an already stressed mental healthcare system, reduce the options for care available to individuals and families who need high-quality mental health services, and impose a greater burden on hospital emergency departments, outpatient clinics, and crisis services, at a time when Connecticut is struggling with ominous and intensifying threats to public health from heroin use and prescription drug abuse. This is exactly the wrong time for the state to withdraw its support of our mental healthcare system.

Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center serves more than 8,220 inpatients and provides 32,130 outpatient visits with mental health and substance abuse disorders. Services include inpatient, outpatient (with 5 satellite locations), consultation and liaison, and crisis emergency services. The Saint Francis Behavioral Health Group employs 18 physicians, 8 APRN's, 30 clinicians, and 25 support staff.

Johnson Memorial Hospital serves more than 623 inpatients, 1,400 crisis evaluations, and provides 95 Chemical Dependency program visits with mental health and substance abuse disorders. It is expected, based on current volume and trend, this number will exceed in 2016. Services include inpatient, consultation and liaison, crisis emergency, and chemical dependency program services.

The Governor is asking for a \$16 million reduction in grants for mental health and substance abuse services. These cuts will impact community and hospital-based outpatient mental health and substance abuse treatment services. Demand for these services has not abated, and grant funds are essential to maintain the person-centered, recovery-oriented care provided by these programs. Loss of these funds will lead to community closures. As a result, hospital emergency rooms will be inundated by the people once served by these closed programs as they will be left with no other choices. These cuts could derail national and state efforts to bring parity between the treatment provided to those needing medical care and patients who need mental health services. This could also lead to accidental harm to self and/or others.

The threat to public health due to the current state of opioid drug use has reached alarming proportion. Among the services at risk is the 20-bed detoxification unit within the Addiction Services Division of the Middletown campus of Connecticut Valley Hospital. If these beds are closed, community providers will no longer have access to these beds or be equipped to address the medical and mental health needs of these patients. They will be forced to rely on hospital-based care, most likely through our emergency departments. This will be more costly to the state and result in less satisfactory outcomes and patient experiences.

Another distressing budget adjustment includes the \$3 million proposed cut to the grant program authorized by the General Assembly last year to establish Community Care Teams (CCTs). These teams were successfully piloted in certain regions of the state, bringing together medical, mental health, and social service providers to address the needs of frequent visitors to emergency departments. The \$3 million in funding is necessary to sustain existing CCTs and fund the establishment of new CCTs in every region of the state. CCTs are a proven, integrated care model, resulting in improved patient outcomes, less pressure on care providers, and fewer ED visits by Medicaid clients, which saves the state money. There are 42 agencies that work with the Greater Hartford area to provide access to community services that supports mental, physical health and wellbeing.

We recognize that the state is facing a challenging budget, but we ask that you do not enact cuts to mental health and substance abuse treatment services included in HB 5044. Hospitals and other community providers need your support to preserve what remains of the mental health safety net at the very time Connecticut residents are demanding improvements to the mental health system. Thank you for your consideration of our position.