



Donald A. Neel
Board Chair

Luis B. Pérez, LCSW
President & CEO

Testimony before the Government Administration and Elections Committee regarding:

**Opposition to sections 27 and 28 in
H.B. No. 5049 – AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR’S BUDGET
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

February 22ND, 2016

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila and distinguished members of the Government Administrations and Elections Committee, my name is Suzi Craig and I am the Senior Director of Advocacy at Mental Health Connecticut. As an advocacy organization, direct service provider and educator, Mental Health Connecticut is on a mission to improve the mental health for all Connecticut residents.

I am here to express our opposition to Sections 27 and 28 of HB 5049, An Act Implementing the Governor’s Budget Recommendations for General Government.

Section 27 and 28 would revoke critical access to care, much-needed prevention or crisis-intervention services for pregnant women or new mothers. Specifically:

“Sections 27 and 28 would repeal coverage designed for “Evidence-based maternal, infant and early childhood home visitation services, [...] that are designed to improve health outcomes for pregnant women, postpartum mothers and newborns and children, including, but not limited to, for maternal substance use disorders or depression and relationship-focused interventions for children with mental or nervous conditions or substance use disorders;” for fully insured individual and group health insurance policies.

Through SB 1085 and other means, we have worked hard to ensure insurance parity in Connecticut, for private and public health coverage, is the best in the nation. Let’s continue on this path and continue to be a leader in this area for our residents. Whether coverage for these services is mandated by the federal government or not, Connecticut must ensure that we continue to lead the way in early intervention and prevention of health services.

We continue to see gaps in insurance coverage for those who are privately insured. Removing sections 27 and 28 would further create instability for a highly vulnerable population. One in five mothers experience postpartum depression. Depression in pregnant women and new mothers has been shown to have an effect on a newborn’s emotional and cognitive development because it can impede with the bonds of mother-infant attachment, which has been proven to be essential to brain development.



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This type of evidence-based community service is designed to avert costly scenarios down the road – costly in the form of compromised health and wellbeing to the families who suffer from untreated mental health conditions that co-occur with a pregnancy and costly in the form of dollars incurred to the municipalities and the state when emergency room visits or more intensive treatment programs are required.

Sections 27 and 28 – and any protections like this that are currently in place – remove the ability for early identification and prevention of mental health conditions causing long-term damage to Connecticut families. SB 1085, “An Act Concerning Insurance Health coverage for Mental Health or Nervous Conditions,” was created to improve the health outcomes for mothers, children, and families.

Anything that stands in the way of allowing for this vital outcome of health and wellbeing to occur, such as repealing efforts originally designated in SB 1085, puts us ten steps back from the progress we thought we had made.

In the midst of fighting to retain our current funding, now we are fighting to ensure access to care remains intact. Essentially, by opposing Sections 27 and 28, I am asking you to safeguard the system of care that is vital to our Connecticut friends and neighbors, regardless of any federal legislation that exists or may exist in the future.

Thank you for your time and for your service.

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Sources:

“Addressing Maternal Mental Health in the Pediatric Medical Home by Child Health and Development Institute of CT” (CHDI): Glascoe, F. (n.d). Screening for maternal perinatal depression: Tools and exemplary approaches for screening.

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