Written Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Health and Hospitals
Funding for the Connecticut Mental Health Center

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Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Although I follow local, state and national politics closely, I rarely feel compelled to contact my representatives because I know what I don’t know. In other words, I recognize that my elected officials have specialized knowledge that I don’t possess. This expertise likely informs their opinions and decisions in a way that may not always be immediately clear to me. I write to you now because I have specialized knowledge that prompts me to strongly oppose any budget cuts to the Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC) and, more broadly, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS).

As an MD with specialized training in psychiatry and a PhD with specialized training in neuroscience, I am uniquely positioned to discuss the devastating impact that a cut to the CMHC budget would have on communities throughout Connecticut. CMHC is an innovative health care agency that provides critical psychiatric and substance abuse treatment for patients who lack the financial or cognitive means to obtain such services on their own. I have worked at CMHC in various capacities (as a physician and a researcher) and can personally attest to the vital mission of the agency. There is no other agency that can take its place or provide similar services for this vulnerable population. Without CMHC, disadvantaged patients without health insurance either forgo treatment altogether (which can have any number of devastating personal and communal consequences) or end up in emergency rooms across the state (thereby increasing the cost of healthcare for everyone). Any money saved with a prospective budget cut to CMHC will be promptly negated by stressed community infrastructure.

It is important to note that CMHC is not exclusively a clinical health care agency; it is also a nexus for education, community outreach, biotechnological innovations, neuroscience research and legal policy. CMHC has played an integral role in attracting talented individuals (physicians, scientists, entrepreneurs) and productive companies to New Haven. It also stimulates the local economy in more practical and concrete ways, including facility fees, research grants, private and public investments (e.g. Pfizer, Yale, etc.) and biomedical companies (e.g. New Haven Pharmaceuticals, Neurogen Corporation, etc.). These are just a few of the reasons why CMHC is a critical resource for and asset to the state of Connecticut.

Funding for the CMHC and DMHAS should not be viewed as a cost. Instead, it should be viewed as an investment, one that will return measurable and immeasurable dividends for years to come. My colleagues and I strongly urge you to oppose budget cuts to these critical agencies.

Thank you for your time and for your service to Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Joseph J. Taylor, MD, PhD