



Kimberlee Pita
Board Chair

Luis B. Pérez, LCSW
President & CEO

**Testimony in support of
H.B. No. 7166 AN ACT CONCERNING NONEMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION
FOR MEDICAID BENEFICIARIES
Public Health Committee, Public Hearing, February 28, 2019**

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Logan, Representative Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

My name is Suzi Craig and I am the Senior Director of Policy at Mental Health Connecticut (MHC), and I am also the lead for the CT Parity Coalition (www.ctparitycoalition.org). MHC provides community-based services across Connecticut, and we have offices in six areas – Stamford, Bridgeport, Waterbury, Torrington, Danbury, and West Hartford – providing services that support the four pillars of recovery: home, health, purpose, and community.

H.B. 7166 would establish a statutory right to ensure that Medicaid beneficiaries receive timely and appropriate nonemergency medical transportation (NEMT), and will improve ways appeal lapses in service.

In 2018, the provision of Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT) services transitioned from LogistiCare to Veyo. This new contract was sought by DSS to address a history of complaints from Medicaid recipients regarding LogistiCare's service delivery and to provide more economical NEMT services to Connecticut.

As MHC and many others testified last year, the disruption in non-emergency medical transportation for Medicaid recipients has been devastating for many people. At the start, Veyo, the company contracted with DSS, was fielding 10-18,000 calls per day when they were told to expect 3-4,500 calls per day. Last year we heard that, at one point, it was so bad that 7 people on dialysis did not get their transportation and ended up in the hospital. Many others were not picked up or left stranded.

It quickly became clear that Veyo was not adequately prepared for the transition. Training and staffing problems with Veyo's call center, ride-scheduling, and bus pass-issuing services prevented many Medicaid beneficiaries from accessing transportation. This led to numerous missed healthcare appointments, jeopardizing the wellbeing and safety of children and adults who rely on NEMT services for behavioral healthcare, addiction treatment, and basic medical care.



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Medicaid beneficiaries rely on NEMT to get to their health appointments on time, including mental health and substance abuse treatment services. In the midst of an opioid epidemic, missing appointments due to transportation issues is a matter of life and death.

For MHC program participants who have reported missing or canceling appointments, this means that, because of a lack of transportation, they are not accessing the care they need. For those of us who can easily hop in a car to get to an appointment and our only barrier is traffic, also imagine having more things in your way – co-occurring medical issues, living with mental health or substance experiences that make it difficult to move forward, etc. – as well as the added aggravation of having to worry about transportation. And now that transportation hasn't arrived (or the only option is a bus pass when taking the bus is not an option due to health concerns), where do you go from here?

This disruption in service also impacts staff resources for MHC and other community providers, who are forced to divert staff hours toward waiting on hold to schedule rides or find workarounds when transport never arrived.

DSS has taken action over the past year, demanding a corrective action plan from Veyo, increasing their responsiveness to complaints and improving transparency in efforts to hold Veyo accountable. It appears that Veyo has made improvements since the corrective action plan was developed, but unfortunately, Medicaid recipients are still reporting significant barriers to accessing care.

For the most vulnerable of our friends and neighbors to experience barriers to accessing healthcare is unacceptable. I urge you to support H.B.7166.

Thank you for your time and for your service,

Suzi Craig
Senior Director of Policy