



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES**  
*A Healthcare Service Agency*

NED LAMONT  
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM E. DELPHIN-RITTMON, Ph.D.  
COMMISSIONER

**Testimony by Miriam Delphin-Rittmon**  
**Commissioner**  
**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
**Before the Public Health Committee**

Good Morning Senator Abram, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on **SB 1057 AN ACT CONCERNING OPIOID USE DISORDER**.

Section 1 of this bill requires Institutions of Higher Education to address and make available opioid antagonists in the event of an opioid overdose. DMHAS is in support of the widespread availability of opioid antagonists as a means of reducing tragic, unnecessary deaths related to the opioid crisis in Connecticut. As a leader addressing the opioid crisis, DMHAS has recently made opioid antagonists available for distribution to those at risk of overdose in every Connecticut hospital emergency department using federal funds. While DMHAS is not able to provide this lifesaving medication to every college, agency experts are available to train college campuses on opioid antagonist use should this be desired by the institutions.

Section 2 of this bill requires DMHAS to conduct a study of the efficacy of home health care agencies providing MAT for opioid use disorders. DMHAS does not have the resources to perform a comprehensive study of this nature but would be able to do a literature review related this topic as well as provide information on how this service could potentially fit within the current robust continuum of services. DMHAS would defer to the Department of Social Services related to the feasibility of expanding Medicaid reimbursement for this type of service.

Sections 3 and 5 of the bill outline good clinical practice for practitioners treating individuals with opioid use disorders. This practice includes education related to opioid antagonists for those with opioid use disorders and their loved ones as well as taking steps to ensure the life-saving medication is available. DMHAS would also like to clarify the definition proposed in Section 3 for "opioid use disorder." Currently, the statute states: "(2) 'Opioid use disorder' means a problematic pattern of opioid use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress." Since stigma is of major concern in health providers' responses to patients with opioid use disorder, it is less stigmatizing to define opioid use disorder as a medical condition. DMHAS respectfully requests the Committee consider changing the suggested language to define "Opioid use disorder" as a medical condition characterized by a problematic pattern of opioid use and misuse leading to clinically significant impairment or distress."

DMHAS has been a proponent of mental health first aid training for many years as a vehicle to increase understanding of mental health diagnoses and reducing stigma. Mental Health First Aid is a national program that teaches skills to respond to signs of mental illness and substance use. DMHAS has sponsored training in Connecticut for individuals to become certified mental health first aid trainers. Mental health first aid trainings have been provided in many communities across the state. DMHAS defers to the CT Department of Public Health on the feasibility of implementing Section 4 of this bill related to emergency response services.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on this bill as it relates to DMHAS. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.