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Written testimony in Human Services

March 25, 2021

On

HB NO. 6637: AN ACT CONCERNING STATE-WIDE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR DEAF, DEAF-BLIND AND HARD OF HEARING PERSONS.

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

On behalf of the physicians and physicians-in-training of the Connecticut ENT Society, an organization representing over 90% of the otolaryngologists practicing in Connecticut, we thank you for the opportunity to provide this supporting testimony on **HB 6637, An Act Concerning State-Wide Mental Health Services for Deaf, Deaf-blind and Hard of Hearing Persons.**

The Connecticut ENT Society supports the spirit of HB 6637. Hearing health and mental health are inter-related. Scientific evidence supports a strong connection between the two conditions. A search of the National Library of Medicine on these two conditions yields over 1200 scientific manuscripts that provide evidence on this relationship. An exhaustive review of this literature is not feasible in this venue, but we wish to cite the conclusion arrived at by Dr. Debara L. Tucci, Director of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, in her appraisal of the evidence in the journal of Psychology and Medicine (2019 April; 49(6): 892-897), entitled "Hearing loss and psychiatric disorders: a review". In this review, Dr. Tucci and her coauthor, Dr. Dan G. Blazer confirm that hearing loss is associated with cognitive impairment, depression, anxiety disorders, and psychoses. In a separate review, Dr. Blazer in Clinical Geriatric Medicine (2020 May; 26(2)201-209) highlights the impact of hearing loss on psychiatric disorders in the geriatric population. Similarly, hearing-impairment in children is associated with depression and anxiety (Int J Pediatr Otorhinolaryngol. 2011 Oct;75(10):1313-7). Childhood hearing loss also impacts mental health in adulthood (BMC Public Health 2019 volume 19: 168).

Overwhelming evidence supports the hearing loss-mental health relationship and documents the impact on the overall health and quality of life of individuals with hearing impairments. The members of the Connecticut Ear, Nose and Throat Society are actively engaged in treatment of hearing loss, but our interest in holistic management of sufferers drives us to support other needs of the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing individuals. In particular, mental health needs of this population requires additional attention and resources to facilitate their optimal functional status and roles in their respective social units with the ultimate goal of maintaining integration of the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing in the society. We believe **HB 6637** is a step in that direction.

Respectfully,

Connecticut Ear, Nose and Throat Society

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