



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2015**

**SB 841, An Act Concerning The Implementation Of A Comprehensive Children's
Mental, Emotional And Behavioral Health Plan**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **SB 841, An Act Concerning The Implementation Of A Comprehensive Children's Mental, Emotional And Behavioral Health Plan**. CHA supports the bill.

Before commenting on the bill, it's important to point out that Connecticut hospitals treat everyone who comes through their doors 24 hours a day, regardless of ability to pay.

This is a time of unprecedented change in healthcare, and Connecticut hospitals are leading the charge to transform the way care is provided. They are focused on providing safe, accessible, equitable, affordable, patient-centered care for all, and they are finding innovative solutions to integrate and coordinate care to better serve their patients and communities.

SB 841 will establish the Children's Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board to oversee and execute the comprehensive implementation plan described in the *Connecticut Behavioral Health Plan for Children*, a report developed under the leadership of the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

A core finding of the Plan is that children's mental health services are fragmented, inefficient, and difficult to access for children and families. It acknowledges the critically important role of hospital Emergency Departments (EDs) in the behavioral health safety net supporting Connecticut children and families. The Plan states that as many as 20 percent of Connecticut's children, roughly 156,000, have mental health needs and would benefit from treatment. One key assertion in the Plan is that "Connecticut must recognize the heavy burden that EDs face and try to expand crisis response and treatment services."

CHA and several Connecticut hospitals have testified before lawmakers and state agencies about the increasing rate of hospital visits for behavioral health across all age groups. Over the past several years, inpatient behavioral health discharges from hospitals have increased, with the largest increases occurring among children ages 0-12 and adolescents ages 13-20. The number of visits to EDs involving behavioral health disorders that do not result in hospital admissions has also grown, with the largest increases occurring among children ages 0-12.

Connecticut hospitals are committed to developing short- and long-term solutions to improve Connecticut's mental health system for children and their families. We support plans to improve Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services, which include developing minimum criteria for facilitating effective diversions and achieving appropriate placements for children in crisis, increase crisis stabilization resources for DCF and non-DCF children, and implement a psychiatric assessment center.

This Plan provides Connecticut with a unique and timely opportunity to align policy and systems to support youth and families and to promote healthy development for all our children. Connecticut hospitals look forward to participating in the implementation of the Plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.