



**TESTIMONY OF  
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
Friday, February 16, 2018**

**HB 5035, An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium  
Ending June 30, 2019**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5035, An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2019**. CHA supports funding for emergency placements in the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) budget and opposes cuts to mental health and substance use services in the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget, given the crucial role hospitals play in providing all types of medical and behavioral health services to patients in Connecticut.

Before commenting on the bill, it's important to point out that Connecticut hospitals provide high quality care for everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. Connecticut hospitals are dynamic, complex organizations that are continually working to find innovative ways to better serve patients and communities and build a healthier Connecticut. They are developing integrated delivery networks with physicians, services, and technology to make sure patients receive high quality, coordinated, cost-effective, patient focused, and equitable care. By investing in the future of Connecticut's hospitals, we will strengthen our healthcare system and our economy, put communities to work, and deliver affordable care that Connecticut families deserve.

CHA applauds the proposed appropriation to DDS of \$5 million to support emergency placements for residential and day services and for youth in Emergency Departments. Hospitals across the state have been experiencing a steady increase in the number of young adults coming to our Emergency Departments seeking treatment for a combination of medical and mental health disorders. Once the medical emergency is resolved, it is often difficult for hospitals to arrange for placement of these patients in an appropriate setting due to the absence of viable options in the community. On occasion, patients may spend several weeks in the hospital simply awaiting placement. This is an unacceptable practice from every perspective. It does not serve the best interests of patients, their families, or hospital staff. It is suboptimal for bed availability, healthcare costs, and the healthcare system. CHA supports an appropriation to DDS to address this problem.

CHA opposes cuts to mental health and substance use services. Specifically, CHA opposes the Governor's proposed \$3 million reduction in grants for mental health and substance use services, plus cuts amounting to another \$1 million to regional mental health centers, home, and community-based services. This is no time to cut services for mental health and addiction services. Connecticut citizens continue to wrestle with prescription drug abuse and the opioid epidemic; their conditions are often exacerbated by unmet social service, medical, or mental health needs. Our Emergency Departments are already filled on any given day with patients who are in crisis, often struggling to cope with mental health disorders or living through the consequences of substance abuse. The proposed reductions will put a further undue burden on hospitals and other community providers to answer the call to care for these patients, when these settings are not the most appropriate for the patients. As well, the proposed cuts will put additional financial pressure on all community providers, including hospitals.

The Governor's budget adjustment also calls for a \$2 million reduction to the DMHAS budget to accommodate the privatization of DMHAS Young Adult Services residential beds. Recent agency proposals have also mentioned closing detoxification beds and geriatric beds at Connecticut Valley Hospital, and the privatization of mental health beds currently located at the Capitol Region Mental Health Center in Hartford. We question whether these actions serve the best interests of the patients served by these resources.

We urge lawmakers to examine the acuity of these present and future patients and demand confirmation that the institutions that assume responsibility for these patients can provide a level of care that equals or exceeds the current standards. As you know, in addition to the patients and families that will be affected by such changes, Connecticut's hospitals and caregivers will also bear the brunt of cuts to mental health services.

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