



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Monday, March 14, 2022**

**HB 5275, An Act Prohibiting Certain Health Carriers From
Requiring Step Therapy For Prescription Drugs Used To Treat Mental Or
Behavioral Health Conditions**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 5275, An Act Prohibiting Certain Health Carriers From Requiring Step Therapy For Prescription Drugs Used To Treat Mental Or Behavioral Health Conditions**. CHA supports the bill.

Since early 2020, hospitals and health systems have been at the center of Connecticut's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, acting as a vital partner with the state and our communities. Hospitals expanded critical care capacity, procured essential equipment and supplies, and stood up countless community COVID-19 testing locations. Hospitals have been an essential component of the statewide vaccine distribution plan including efforts to reach and serve historically under-resourced communities disproportionately affected by the virus.

HB 5275 makes a modest but important change to existing state statute regulating the use of step therapy, by prohibiting the required use of step therapy for a prescribed drug for the treatment of a mental or behavioral health condition, provided the prescribed drug is in compliance with approved U.S. Food and Drug Administration indications. Connecticut law already includes a similar carve out for prescribed drugs for cancer treatment for an individual with stage IV metastatic cancer.

The pandemic exposed and aggravated deficiencies in Connecticut's behavioral health system. Rising numbers of people experiencing mental health and substance use issues due to isolation, delay in care, and fear caused by COVID-19, coupled with chronic staffing shortages, have stressed our system even further. The crisis is evident in hospital emergency departments (EDs), which are often the only option for people who cannot access care in more appropriate settings.

A collaborative effort is under way among many stakeholders, including legislators, state agencies, hospitals, and other community partners to address this crisis and meet the needs of pediatric, adolescent, adult, and geriatric patients.

In order to meet the challenges we are facing, it is important that we take a whole-system approach—supporting additional resources and taking down barriers to care. HB 5275 addresses one such barrier.

The practice of medicine and the provision of healthcare change rapidly with new technologies and as science evolves. It should be left to trained and licensed healthcare providers to review, consider, and incorporate new information, emerging technologies, healthcare approaches, and available medications in treatment and care conversations with their patients.

This is especially true for individuals seeking care for behavioral and mental health conditions. Providers require the flexibility to prescribe in a manner that, in their professional judgement, best meet the clinical needs of their patients, and they should retain the flexibility to alter that course of care if required. These prescribing decisions should be made by the provider and patient, not by an insurance company.

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