



**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 2, 2021**

**HB 6510, An Act Requiring The Provision Of Information Concerning Children's
Mental Health Services In Hospital Emergency Rooms**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 6510, An Act Requiring The Provision Of Information Concerning Children's Mental Health Services In Hospital Emergency Rooms**. CHA supports efforts to provide information to parents and guardians on evaluation and treatment resources for children with psychiatric disabilities and behavioral health disorders. We have concerns about certain aspects of the bill.

Since early 2020, Connecticut's hospitals and health systems have been at the center of the state's response to the current global public health emergency. Hospitals expanded critical care capacity, staffed to meet unprecedented patient need, deployed community COVID-19 testing locations, and are now playing a key role in the administration of vaccines. Through it all, hospitals and health systems have continued to provide high-quality care for everyone, regardless of ability to pay. This tireless commitment to the COVID-19 response confirms the value of strong hospitals in Connecticut's public health infrastructure and economy and reinforces the need for a strong partnership between the state and hospitals.

Connecticut hospitals support initiatives to strengthen behavioral healthcare services for children and adults. Between FY 2015 and FY 2020, Connecticut hospitals experienced a 27 percent increase in patients with a behavioral health diagnosis. This number does not include behavioral health services delivered by hospital clinicians via telehealth, which increased to historic and unprecedented levels during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were nearly 32,000 hospital visits for behavioral health diagnoses among children and young adults ages 0-19 in FY 2020. During this same period, patients on outpatient observation status—allowing a doctor to monitor a child or young adult's condition in order to determine whether an admission is required—increased by almost 300 percent.¹

The need for access to information concerning evaluation and treatment resources for children with psychiatric disabilities and behavioral health disorders has never been greater. CHA urges the state to commit sufficient resources and funds to develop, distribute, and

¹ Data Source: FY 2020 ChimeData

maintain such information in a wide variety of formats, mediums, and modalities. We also recommend broad dissemination of this information to hospitals, other medical and behavioral healthcare providers, primary care physicians, child and adolescent psychologists, other clinicians who work with children and adolescents, social service providers to children and families, schools, and youth organizations. Making this information available to members of the public in a variety of ways will help parents and guardians connect their children with necessary evaluation and treatment before a visit to an emergency department becomes necessary.

There is no need to impose a mandate on hospitals to distribute this information to the parents and guardians of certain children upon discharge from an emergency department. Hospitals will voluntarily do their part to distribute this information to parents and guardians of children treated in all hospital settings.

If you mandate the distribution of this information by emergency departments, then hospitals will need appropriate guidance from the state regarding the specific categories of children targeted to receive this information, and sufficient time and administrative guidance from the state to adapt their systems, policies, and practices, understand the new rule, and ensure that hospitals are able to comply.

CHA and Connecticut hospitals are committed to working with the state to make information on evaluation and treatment resources available to parents and guardians. We urge you to pursue this course of action absent the mandate on hospitals.

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