

**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 28, 2023**

**HB 6900, An Act Concerning The Behavioral And Mental Health
Policy Oversight Committee**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony concerning **HB 6900, An Act Concerning The Behavioral And Mental Health Policy Oversight Committee (BMHPOC)**. CHA supports the goals of the bill and recommends an important addition to BMHPOC membership.

Connecticut hospitals continue to meet the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and are now facing new challenges of treating sicker patients than they saw before the pandemic, with a dedicated but smaller workforce who are exemplary but exhausted. They are also experiencing significant financial hardships brought on by record inflation. Through it all, hospitals have been steadfast, providing high-quality care for everyone who walks through their doors, regardless of ability to pay.

CHA is grateful for the opportunity to submit testimony concerning HB 6900. We acknowledge that the BMHPOC will evaluate the availability and efficacy of prevention, early intervention, and mental health treatment services and options for children from birth to age eighteen and make recommendations to the General Assembly and executive agencies regarding the governance and administration of the mental healthcare system for children.

We believe that the BMHPOC should include representatives of all stakeholders in the children's behavioral healthcare system, including individuals working in hospitals that are licensed as general hospitals under Connecticut law. CHA appreciates the appointment of two representatives of children's hospitals in Public Act 22-47. We urge the Committee to amend the statute to provide for the appointment of additional representatives currently working in hospitals licensed as general hospitals and caring for children and adolescent patients in both emergency departments and inpatient psychiatric units, as follows:

- One representative who shall be a provider currently working in the emergency department of a hospital licensed as a general hospital; and

- One representative who shall be a provider currently working in an inpatient psychiatric unit of a hospital licensed as a general hospital.

CHA believes that achieving an optimal system that addresses the emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs of *all* of Connecticut's children will require efficient delivery of a comprehensive array of effective services and the maximizing of all available government and commercial resources.

A consistent theme from the proceedings of the Children's Behavioral Health Plan Implementation Advisory Board (Advisory Board) is the "fragmentation" of Connecticut's behavioral health system for children. Efforts to coordinate and align existing oversight and advisory functions continue to be an important first step toward a system in which access to services will be delinked from pre-existing agency involvement, insurance status, geographic location, and other factors, resulting in access to care by all children and their families based solely on their needs.¹

CHA endorses the recommendation included in the 2022 Annual Report of the Advisory Board to determine and implement the most expedient strategy for consolidating existing advisory and oversight authority in order to advance development of a seamless, coordinated, and integrated children's behavioral health system. At present, there exist no fewer than six advisory and oversight bodies that impact children's behavioral health. These include the BMHPOC, the Advisory Board, and four other boards, committees, and councils. We urge the BMHPOC to shepherd the consolidation and alignment of advisory and oversight efforts impacting the children's behavioral health system.

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

¹ Connecticut Children's Behavioral Health Plan, October 2014, at page 14.