



Wheeler

WHEELER CLINIC
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Date: March 12, 2015
To: Human Services Committee
From: Wendy DeAngelo, MBA, Chief Business Development Officer
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Re: HB 6947 An Act Concerning State Contracts for Human Services (Support)

Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Markley, Representative Wood and honorable members of the Human Services Committees. My name is Wendy DeAngelo, and I am the Chief Business Development Officer of Wheeler Clinic. I would like to thank you for providing this opportunity to speak today in support of HB 6947, An Act Concerning State Contracts for Human Services, on behalf of my 900 colleagues and the more than 19,000 individuals we serve each year.

Wheeler provides a comprehensive continuum of mental health and substance abuse recovery, primary care, community justice, education, child welfare, early childhood and prevention and wellness services across Connecticut. The individual and families who come to us for care include some of the most vulnerable populations in our state including individuals with serious and frequently co-occurring mental illness and addiction, co-morbid medical disorders and histories of exposure to trauma and violence. The services we provide are highly effective in helping these individuals and families function successfully in the community, diverting emergency room and inpatient hospitalizations, and reducing truancy and recidivism, but these services are also chronically underfunded.

State funding for human services has not only failed to keep pace with the cost of living, but frequent budget cuts and rescissions, have undermined nonprofit provider capacity to meet the growing demand for essential health services or attract and retain a skilled workforce to provide high quality care. We have maximized savings through expense reduction initiatives, reconfigured our benefits to reduce costs and increased our fundraising revenue significantly – but these efforts cannot bridge the ever-increasing chasm created by inadequate purchase of service contracts and Medicaid fee for service rates and we will have to reduce access to care.

Individuals and families in need of critical community based services will not simply disappear into this chasm if care is no longer available. Instead, they will have to seek exponentially more expensive services in emergency departments and hospitals, or worse, seek no help at all. They may end up in jails, become homeless, or become a danger to themselves or others. The long-term costs to the state and to individuals and families are untenable.

By ensuring uniform and adequate reimbursement for private providers of state-contracted health and human services, HB 6947 represents an opportunity to support effective, cost-efficient service delivery that supports the health and safety of all of our communities. These short-term investments yield long-term savings for our state and life-long benefits for vulnerable children and families. We respectfully encourage your support of this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or for additional information.