



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
**DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES**  
*A Healthcare Service Agency*

M. JODI RELL  
GOVERNOR

PATRICIA A. REHMER, MSN  
COMMISSIONER

**Testimony of Patricia Rehmer, MSN, Commissioner**  
**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**  
**Submitted to the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes**  
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Good afternoon, Sen. Slossberg, Rep. Spallone and distinguished members of the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes. I am Commissioner Patricia Rehmer of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to provide you with some feedback on the current list of proposals before you that could save state resources and reshape government. I understand that you have a very difficult task before you and want to be as helpful as possible in these fiscally difficult times.

DMHAS is a health care agency that provides services to approximately 90,000 individuals with psychiatric disabilities and/or substance use disorders per year. We fund more than 200 private not-for-profit agencies and operate over 900 inpatient psychiatric and substance use inpatient beds, as well as state-operated Local Mental Health Authorities in your communities. We do our best to promote recovery and wellness within the population we serve and work with individuals to maintain successful lives in the community. It is a delicate balance of state resources, dedicated state and private not-for-profit provider staff, state agency collaboration and client determination that allows people to recover their lives on a daily basis.

Recently, the legislature and others have begun to focus on redirecting state dollars from the operation of prisons with special attention given to persons with psychiatric disabilities and substance use disorders. DMHAS runs a number of programs that help facilitate that goal, both within the prison system and the Judicial Branch. Proposal number 17 expands upon current practice. DMHAS would be remiss if we did not note that in order for these programs to be successful, a full array of community services— including housing— needs to be made available to this population. Thus, we believe it would be prudent for your deliberations to include the costs associated with the expansion of successful community services for this population.

We would also like to ask the Commission to move cautiously regarding the sharing of information involving veterans. Proposal #29 would require those state agencies that serve veterans to share their information with the Department of Veteran Affairs so that they can explore other dollars for services. While we do ask individuals receiving care from DMHAS about their veteran's status, we cannot share that information with other agencies unless the individual has given us permission to do so.

Many people need to be encouraged to access psychiatric and substance use services out of fear that doing so might impact their career. Because there is still an incredible amount of stigma that holds people back from seeking such assistance, anything that threatens the confidentiality of the clinical relationship does not serve the individual or society very well, and it could keep some veterans from asking for and obtaining help. For this reason, we ask that you allow for the person seeking services to give permission before we share information that identifies him or her as a person seeking psychiatric or substance use services.

One last caution to your group revolves around the issue of expanding federal matching funds for many services that are currently state-funded. While we have participated in many new federal waivers and state plan amendments to bring in additional federal dollars for DMHAS state-funded services, there are issues that arise for our population that need to be managed. Recovery supports are a key part of the success we have seen for individuals living in the community, and many of those supports are currently not funded by the federal government. We ask that your estimates regarding federal matching dollars for current state-funded programs take into account the flexibility an agency such as DMHAS requires in order to meet the needs of all the people we serve.

We appreciate the time and effort that you are devoting to your deliberations. Please do not hesitate to ask for our assistance as you move forward. Thank you.

