



CONNECTICUT
ASSOCIATION
of NONPROFITS

*...to serve, strengthen
and support Connecticut's
nonprofit community.*

Testimony before the Public Health Committee
3.16.09

In support of
SB 1121, AAC Mental Health Parity and the Administration of the
Charter Oak Health Plan

BY LIZA ANDREWS, PUBLIC POLICY SPECIALIST

Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits) represents 530 nonprofit organizations in Connecticut, 300 of which receive state funding to provide health and human services on its behalf.

CT Nonprofits supports SB 1121 and urges comprehensive coverage for mental health services consistent with the requirements of private health insurance policies issued in Connecticut. Currently, the Charter Oak Health Plan does not treat mental health benefits the same as other medical benefits, placing financial limitations as well as limitations on the number of visits for mental healthcare treatment. Connecticut does have a Mental Health Parity Law which directs that mental health services cannot cost more than medical and surgical coverage and is currently regarded as being one of the strongest parity laws in the nation. Unfortunately, mental health parity is the only insurance mandate that Charter Oak is not required to follow.

Advocates for the Charter Oak Health Plan have indicated that mental health parity cannot be included in the plan because it “dramatically increases the target premium.” Several reports, however, show that mental health parity has an insignificant impact on cost. The Congressional Budget Office agrees and reports a 0.4% estimated cost impact to implement mental health parity. And this impact does not even consider the savings in other healthcare services, such as cost savings from decreased visits to primary care doctors or emergency rooms.

CT Nonprofits has approximately 40 members who provide mental health services. Employees of these organizations dedicate themselves to improving the health and well-being of countless individuals with mental health disabilities. These individuals deserve to receive adequate and affordable coverage for their care. With Charter Oak, Connecticut has attempted to create healthcare coverage for the hundreds of thousands of residents who have no coverage. CT Nonprofits supports these efforts; however, full mental health parity must be achieved for Charter Oak to be a truly comprehensive healthcare plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

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