**Testimony of Victoria Veltri**
**State Healthcare Advocate**
**Before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee**
**In support of HB5259**
**February 5, 2015**

Good afternoon, Representative Megna, Senator Crisco, Senator Kelly, Representative Sampson, and members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. For the record, I am Vicki Veltri, State Healthcare Advocate with the Office Healthcare Advocate ("OHA"). OHA is an independent state agency with a three-fold mission: assuring managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare; educating consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans; and, informing you of problems consumers are facing in accessing care and proposing solutions to those problems.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB5259, An Act Expanding Health Insurance Coverage for the Treatment of Mental or Nervous Conditions, and to applaud the positive impact it promotes for Connecticut's citizens. Although we have seen unprecedented collaboration among stakeholders in efforts to improve Connecticut's behavioral healthcare system and consumer access to much needed services, more work remains. HB 5259 addresses a couple of these areas, promoting increased consumer access to appropriate behavioral health providers and greater deference to the treatment recommendations of the treating provider. Adequate provider networks and clinically appropriate duration of treatment are fundamental to positive outcomes for those with behavioral health needs. HB 5259 continues the exploration of opportunities for improvement and collaboration.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to deliver OHA's testimony today. We look forward to continuing to collaborate and advocate for the consumers of Connecticut in this important matter. If you have any questions concerning my testimony, please feel free to contact me at victoria.veltri@ct.gov.