



Comments
for
Stephen C. Taylor, Commissioner
D.C. Department of Insurance, Securities and Banking
on
CareFirst Surplus

July 14, 2016

Throughout its 40 year history, the Greater Washington Society for Clinical Social Work (GWSCSW) has been a strong advocate in support of access to timely, affordable and appropriate health and mental health treatment for all. In recent years, GWSCSW has been an active participant in stakeholder discussions concerning the CareFirst excess surplus and the CareFirst obligation to the District. We provided Testimony at the DISB hearing on June 25, 2014.

Our members - more than 800 licensed independent clinical social workers, the majority of whom reside in and/or practice in the District – are employed in mental health clinics, family service agencies, psychiatric hospitals, medical facilities, non-profit centers, schools, interdisciplinary groups, and private practice. We see at first hand the myriad issues facing District of Columbia residents, and we are acutely aware of our jurisdiction’s health needs.

The Society strongly supports the recommendations outlined in the July 13, 2016 letter to Commissioner Taylor prepared by the coalition of stakeholder organizations brought together by common concerns for the health of DC residents that includes DC Fiscal Policy Institute, Miriam's Kitchen, Washington Interfaith Network (WIN), University Legal Services (ULS), Family Voices of the District of Columbia., Family and Medical Counseling Service, ONE DC, and Children's Law Center, our Society and others.

In addition, we urge that decisions made regarding the focus of grants or investments prioritize mental health concerns. Because of the current heightened tension throughout the country centered on police/community relations, one specific recommendation is for training in “Mental Health First Aid” to be provided across sectors to all District of Columbia police, fire department, corrections, and

school personnel. This evidence-based training in how to identify mental illness, how to respond, and how to access resources has been highly effective in helping law enforcement officers and others to de-escalate mental health crises, to obtain resources, and to decrease the effect of stigma. A second program with the potential of similarly broad-reaching benefits would be “TraumaTraining” to help first responders and others to recognize/understand the effects of trauma - including Secondary Trauma which may be affecting their own lives as well as those they serve.

GWSCSW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the CareFirst Surplus issue, and we applaud you for your leadership. We would be happy to answer any questions or provide further information; please contact Margot Aronson at 202 966 7749. Thank you.

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Greater Washington Clinical Society of Clinical Social Workers