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**SPEECH BY MR ERIC CHUA, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF LAW & MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT, AT
THE BEYOND THE LABEL FESTIVAL, 13 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Ms Theresa Goh, Vice President, National Council of Social Service

Mr Kwong Kin Mun, Chairman, TOUCH Community Services

Mr Tony Tan, Chief Corporate Officer, CapitaLand

Distinguished Guests and Partners of the mental health community,

Friends, ladies and gentlemen,

1 A good evening, one and all. It is truly inspiring to be back at Beyond the Label Fest 2025. When I last joined you in 2023, I was moved by the passion and dedication in our community. Today, I am even more heartened to see that spirit shining even stronger. More voices are joining the conversation, and the commitment to fostering mental well-being has deepened over the years.

2 Mental health is a shared responsibility. The sheer number of partners, organisations and individuals representing the People, Public, and Private sectors today reflect the progress that we have made in building a more caring, inclusive and compassionate Singapore.

3 Over the past year, the Beyond the Label or BTL Collective has made remarkable strides in advancing awareness and support across our nation. From reaching thousands of students through school programmes to empowering families and engaging diverse communities, the BTL Collective's efforts are key to fostering a more resilient society.

BTL Fest 2025: Breaking Stigma, Championing Workplace Mental Health

4 This year's theme, "Breaking Stigma, Championing Workplace Mental Health," shines the spotlight on our workplaces.

5 Work is a big part of our lives. It gives us purpose, connection and accomplishment, but at the same time, sometimes comes with stress and pressure. Creating psychologically safe and inclusive spaces begins with openness — the courage to speak up, and the care to listen and support, without judgment.

6 Consider the experience of Julius Tan. Julius was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2023. After a hospital stay, he chose to be open with his employer, Kenneth, about his condition. His honesty was met with Kenneth's understanding and care. Julius took a six-month mental health break and returned to work at a healthier pace. As an employer, Kenneth found that creating a supportive workplace culture resulted in increased staff commitment and greater staff retention over time. This shows the power of empathy in the workplace — not just for the individual, but for the entire organisation.

7 Another example is the Singapore General Hospital, SGH. Some 5000 of their staff have been trained in psychological first aid, with a robust network of 300 peer supporters. SGH has also established an Office of Wellbeing led by their Deputy CEO, Associate Professor Phua Ghee Chee, and formed an interprofessional Mental Health Committee to promote mental health literacy and skillsets across the entire organisation. This is only possible because SGH has made workplace wellbeing an institutional priority. They have dedicated resources and garnered support from senior management. So today, I commend Kenneth, as well as SGH for their efforts, and I urge organisations in Singapore to lead with empathy and build supportive workplaces so that more employees like Julius can continue to thrive in the workplace.

The Work-Wellbeing Connection

8 The nexus between workplace and mental well-being has been well-established through research. The 2025 Quality of Life study by NCSS, which for the first time examined mental health of Singaporeans as a continuum, found that six in ten individuals with depressive and anxiety symptoms continue to maintain full-time, permanent employment. This highlights the importance of having mental health support at the workplace.

9 The survey also found that those in full-time employment reported a higher quality of life than those unemployed, highlighting the connection between work and well-being, and the critical role inclusive employers play in supporting their employees' well-being.

10 However, the survey also revealed a significant gap: Seven in ten unemployed individuals with diagnosed mental health conditions were unaware of employment support services. There are actually various services like the Integrated Employment Services by Singapore Anglican Community Services, Mindset Learning Hub by Singapore Association for Mental Health's, and OcTAVE Outpatient Rehabilitation Centre by the Institute of Mental Health, that provide skills training, vocational counselling, and job placement support for persons with mental health conditions. This underscores the need for greater outreach to ensure that everyone has access to the support they need to join and stay in the workforce. Beyond helping individuals find employment, we must also ensure workplaces are ready to support them once they're hired.

BTL Collective's Return to Work workshops & initiatives for students and families

11 Initiatives like the BTL Collective's Return to Work workshops equip HR professionals and organisation leaders with practical tools, promoting psychological safety, flexibility, and openness where employees feel safe to seek help without fear of stigma.

12 Employees too can play a part in fostering a supportive work environment. NCSS will be partnering NTUC Learning Hub to conduct a peer support training course for persons with lived experience to support others facing mental health challenges in the workplace. Ultimately, we want to normalise conversations on mental health and direct individuals to seek help early.

13 Beyond workplaces, the BTL Collective is also preparing students for workforce transition through initiatives like the 'Tik Talk!' (as in T-A-L-K) roadshow, which has engaged over a thousand students. The new Internship Edition specifically supports youth in navigating early work experiences, helping them manage stress and build confidence at the same time.

14 Additionally, the BTL Collective empowers families with resources like the Families' Mental Health Toolkit, better equipping them to recognise signs of mental health issues and provide effective support. These efforts remind us that mental well-being support is a shared responsibility — in our schools, in our workplaces, and in our homes.

Closing

15 We all know that life will sometimes throw us lemons, from time to time. It is therefore important that we do not turn to harmful ways of coping, that could potentially lead to addictions. To that end, NCSS has also identified addiction support as a key priority area. Recognising addiction as a serious mental health concern, NCSS has been actively supporting the national response to vaping. Serving as a bridge to the social service sector, NCSS is building the capability and capacity of agencies handling these cases.

16 To close, I would like to thank everyone involved in bringing BTL Fest 2025 to life. The BTL Collective, NCSS, TOUCH Community Services, partners, volunteers and BTL Ambassadors — your unwavering commitment is shaping a brighter, more compassionate and resilient future for all is nothing short of impressive. I think that calls for one final round of applause for all. I also want to thank BTL Fest Campaign Partner, CapitaLand, for hosting us at this wonderful venue.

17 Let's continue to challenge stigma, reach out with empathy, and champion inclusive, mentally healthy workplaces. I encourage all of us to explore resources via the First Stop for Mental Health. By working together across schools, families, the community and workplaces, we can build a stronger, more inclusive Singapore — one where everyone is valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

18 Thank you, and I wish everyone a meaningful and inspiring time at BTL Fest 2025.