

**Paul Acker  
March 17, 2021  
Public Health**

**Testimony in Opposition to Section 2 SB 1 AN ACT EQUALIZING COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC**

**Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, distinguished members of the public health committee. My name is Paul Acker, I am the program manager of advocacy and education for advocacy unlimited and a registered voter in the town of Portland. I am providing testimony in apposition to Section 2 of SB-1 An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.**

**As a person with lived experience in the mental health and addiction fields I have worked as a recovery support specialist for close to 20 years and have taught recovery support specialists for the last five years. This section of the bill seems written by someone who has very little understanding of the true essence of what peer support should be and instead coopts peer support and makes it something that it was never intended to be. Peer support has long been about changing the mental health and addiction fields to help bring about better outcomes and this bill ignores that history.**

**Peer support is an art form that centers around connection in its transformative powers. Peer support is about creating mutually healing spaces for both parties in the peer support relationship. Peer support is a voluntary coming together of two people who use their lived experience to bring new meaning. Section 2 of SB1 would turn peer support into a bunch of tasks that they are allowed to perform, quashing peer support and turning it into a low wage frontline worker. True peer support is about supporting people on their path and not about getting people to buy-in to narrow offerings the system provides.**

**My hope is that the state of Connecticut would see fit to have many options available for people who are in distress instead of further strengthening the monopoly that the current mental health and addiction service system has. Connecticut should be investing in recovery support, peer respite, in the expansion of alternatives for people in distress. The current one size fits all model does not work for everyone. We need to be giving the citizens of the state of Connecticut a full menu of options so that they can address their distress or crisis or trauma in ways that work for them.**

**Passage of this section would send a clear message throughout the state that we no longer believe in the recovery model and we are okay was setting Connecticut back to the dark ages of mental health treatment. I ask that you strike Section 2 from SB-1 and look at bringing true Peer Support and its offerings to scale for the residents of our state.**

**Thank you for your time.**