

S.B. No. 1: AN ACT EQUALIZING COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC.

Public Health Committee

Public Hearing, March 17, 2021

Good Evening Senator Abrams, Rep. Steinberg and the distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Nicole Hampton, and I am employed as a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist and Recovery Coach Professional. I volunteer for the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery, Bridgeport. As well as co-chair both the Catchment Area Council, Area 1 & 2, 3 & 4 and the Billable Peer Support Group.

I am testifying today in opposition of Section 2 of SB 1. This section seeks to authorize the Commissioner of Public Health to provide for the certification and education of peer support specialists and specify the peer support services that a certified peer may provide to another individual in the state.

This section is concerning, and further consideration is needed. I feel like the authenticity of the peer role would definitely be lost.

Currently, in the State of Connecticut, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services endorses a statewide curriculum and exam through Advocacy Unlimited known as the Recovery Support Specialist designation. In addition, the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery offers an internationally recognized educational program for Recovery Coaches, and the Recovery Coach Professional designation. Both of these designations along with others offered in our state can be used towards obtaining the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist certification through the Connecticut Certification Board. The CPRS certification is the only one in the state of Connecticut. A certification by definition must be third party. A certificate program should not be confused with certification.

The Connecticut Certification Board, through the overarching governing body of the International Credentialing & Reciprocity Consortium(IC&RC), an organization of 80 individual certification boards around the world, offers the standardized, valid and reliable, and legally defensible Certified Peer Recovery Specialist certification. The expertise of the Connecticut Certification Board does not lie in the provision of peer services but in credentialing in the behavioral health arena. Keeping our state certification under the CCB would allow us to make changes in real time vs waiting for legislation if under DPH. The Connecticut Certification Board compliments the integrity of the Certified Peer Recovery Specialist role through the standards and ethical practices applied both on a national and international level.

Furthermore, on March 9th, the Insurance and Real Estate Committee held a public hearing to hear HB 6588, AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL HEALTH CARE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES. Section 4 not 2 of HB 6588 will establish a statewide task force to study insurance reimbursement for peer services. This bill is highly supported across the state. Having this task force in place would elevate and formalize the discussion at a state level and make officially recognized recommendations ahead of the next session.

I'm humbly asking you to please strike Section 2 from SB 1, and support the passage of HB 6588 and help Connecticut take the critical steps towards improving our system of care through essential peer support services.

Thank you so much for your time!

Respectfully,

Nicole Hampton, CPRS, RCP