

**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 afternoon Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Barbara-Ann Tuozzolo and I am registered voter in Stamford, CT. I have been employed in a peer support role for over 15 years, the last nine of which I have been employed as a formal, certified Recovery Support Specialist.

I testify today in opposition of Section 2 of SB 1, AN ACT EQUALIZING COMPREHENSIVE ACCESS TO MENTAL, BEHAVIORAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE IN RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC. 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 support specialist may provide to another individual in the state.

This section is concerns me and I believe further consideration is needed.

Currently, the State of Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services endorses a statewide curriculum and examination of peer support specialists, known as Recovery Support Specialists, offered by Advocacy Unlimited. Recovery Support Specialists are employed by behavioral health service organizations and agencies. In addition, the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery offers a nationally recognized educational program for Recovery Coaches. Recovery Coaches are employed across Connecticut and in many other states. 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 2 of HB 6588 will establish a statewide task force to study insurance reimbursement for peer services. This bill is highly supported throughout the state across both the mental health and addiction services and recovery communities. Senate Bill 1, Section 2 provides for certification and education of peer support specialists to provide mental health or co-occurring mental illness and recovery support. However, I encourage the committee opt instead to support the establishment of a task force to study health insurance coverage for peer support services, as provided in House Bill No. 6588, *Act Concerning Mental Health Care And Substance Abuse Services*.

Please strike Section 2 from SB 1 and support the passage of HB 6588. This bill, HB 6588, will allow for a meaningful, and representative, process to be carried out that will inform further development of the peer workforce in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Barbara-Ann Tuozzolo
Recovery Support Specialist