

**Raised Bill # 5821**  
**An Act Concerning Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Services that are**  
**Gender Specific and Trauma Informed.**  
**Judiciary Committee**

March 20, 2006

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Committee.

My name is Jennifer Moriarty. I am a graduate student at the University Of Connecticut School Of Social Work and am employed as a residential case manager in supportive housing. I am a resident of Ridgefield, CT.

I am here to support **Raised Bill # 5821: An Act Concerning Behavioral Health and Substance Abuse Services that are Gender Specific and Trauma Informed.**

Through working with women who have experienced chronic homelessness I have witnessed the ultimate devastation and aftermath of trauma on the lives of women. Many women who enter our supportive housing site have experienced homelessness for nearly a decade of their lives. They have cycled through treatment facilities and the criminal justice system. They have long ago had their children removed from their care and have since lost all contact with them.

They are at the disadvantage that we did not know then what we do know now which is that services addressing the specific needs of women and recognizing the impact of trauma work best. I cannot help but believe that if somewhere along the way they had received the appropriate treatment taking into account the root causes of their issues, their experiences of trauma, that many of them would not have reached the point of losing nearly everything.

Research indicates that many of the women who enter the criminal justice system have been victims of sexual abuse or domestic violence. While working in the field for 4 years I can say that my experience validates this research. Nearly all of the women who have entered our housing site who have experienced chronic homelessness and have, at one time, been involved with the criminal justice system describe histories of sexual abuse, sexual assault, and/or domestic violence. Many have experienced some form of abuse from childhood.

Please consider supporting this bill which will I believe will make better use of state funds, will put to use the large body of research conducted that indicates gender specific and trauma informed services have the best outcomes, and will prevent many women from cycling through systems with needs still not met.

If all state systems work together to provide gender specific and trauma informed treatment, I truly believe there will be fewer repeat offenders, fewer relapses, and less need for extended

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Connecticut has begun to implement this research in programs around the state and for the first time many of the women I work with are beginning to see hope for themselves, attending treatment which acknowledges their traumatic histories and begins to start the healing.

We now have the chance with this bill to treat women appropriately and prevent the circumstances which unfortunately many of the women that I have worked with have had to endure. We have a chance to help them before they have lost as much. Again, I ask that you please consider this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Jennifer Moriarty  
University of Connecticut School of Social Work  
Graduate Student