

IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

RAISED BILL 1068
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14TH, 2007

TESTIMONY OF MR. JOSEPH CONTI
DUTCHER SERVICE
OF THE WHITING FORENSIC DIVISION
CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL
P.O. BOX 351 HOLMES DRIVE
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT, 06457

GOOD MORNING, MADAM CHAIR AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE. MY NAME IS JOSEPH CONTI AND I'M AN IN - PATIENT AT DUTCHER HALL (WHICH IS PART OF THE WHITING FORENSIC DIVISION HERE AT CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL) WHO IS FLOURISHING IN MY RECOVERY FROM MY MENTAL ILLNESS. THANK YOU FOR THE PRIVILEGE AND THE RESPONSIBILITY I HAVE TO SUBMIT MY TESTIMONY ON RAISED BILL 1068.

MY TESTIMONY DOCUMENTS MY OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSED NEW LEGISLATION PERTAINING TO OUR CONNECTICUT PATIENT BILL OF RIGHTS, GENERAL STATUTE, § 17A-548, LIMITING THE PROPERTY RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES WHO ARE FAITHFULLY WORKING ON OUR RECOVERY. AS, I UNDERSTAND THE DMHAS PROPOSAL WILL SEVERALLY LIMIT THE AMOUNT AND EXTENT OF OUR PERSONAL PROPERTY AND IT WILL CONSTITUTE A DEPRAVATION OF THE "RIGHT" TO HOLD OUR OWN PROPERTY. IN PLAIN TERMS, I WOULD NO LONGER HAVE A "STATUTORY RIGHT" TO PROPERTY. IN REALITY THE DIVISION DIRECTOR WOULD CONTROL MY PROPERTY.

I'M OPPOSING THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION PUT FORTH BY DMHAS BECAUSE: FIRSTLY, CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL IS BY DEFINITION A HOSPITAL NOT A PRISON. AND ALL EFFORTS NEED TO BE MADE TO PROTECT OUR "RIGHTS" WHICH ARE GUARANTEED BY THE CONNECTICUT PATIENT BILL OF RIGHTS GENERAL STATUTE, § 17A-548. SECONDLY, I PRESENTLY RESIDE IN THE MEDIUM SECURITY SETTING OF THE WHITING FORENSIC DIVISION KNOWN AS DUTCHER HALL. THE FOCUS OF MY

TREATMENT IN THE DUTCHER SETTING IS COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION. AND BY DEFINITION THE GOAL OF BOTH MY TREATERS AND MYSELF IS THE ASSIMILATION OF MY PERSON BACK INTO SOCIETY AS A RESPONSIBLE AND PRODUCTIVE MEMBER OF THE GREATER SOCIETY BEYOND THE GROUNDS OF CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL. WE ARE ENCOURAGED ON A DAILY BASIS TO PRACTICE BEHAVIORS THAT IDENTIFY US WITH OUR PEERS IN THE LARGER SOCIETY BY DOING THOSE THINGS THAT EVERYONE DOES. USING MYSELF AS AN EXAMPLE I NOTE THE FOLLOWING. FOR ONE I CONTROL MY FINANCES BY MEANS OF HOLDING MY OWN PERSONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNT AND CHECKING ACCOUNT BY RESPONSIBLY DECIDING HOW MUCH I WILL SAVE AND TO WHOM I WILL WRITE MY CHECKS OUT OF MY OWN CHECKING ACCOUNT. AS A PERSON IN RECOVERY HERE AT DUTCHER I WAS ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN TAKING THE ADVOCACY UNLIMITED COURSE BACK IN THE SUMMER OF 2005, WHICH I SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED. AND A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF THE CLASS WORK WAS DONE ON MY LAPTOP COMPUTER OF WHICH I OWN TWO ALONG WITH A PRINTER. THIS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY WOULD HAVE BEEN SEVERELY HAMPERED IF NOT FOR THE ABILITY TO USE MY COMPUTER AND PRINTER. AND WHAT I ALSO ENJOY IS MY PERSONAL EXPRESSION AS I FREELY CHOOSE WHAT TYPE OF CLOTHES I WILL WEAR ON ANY GIVEN OCCASION. RESTRICTING MY CHOICE OF CLOTHING WOULD INFRINGE ON MY DIGNITY, WHICH WOULD IMPACT ON MY INDIVIDUALITY. WHICH WOULD DETRACT FROM MY REINTEGRATION BACK INTO SOCIETY. AS I WOULD BE LESSONED AS A PERSON IF I WAS, FORCED TO WEAR ONLY A CERTAIN TYPE OF CLOTHING SAY ONLY A STANDARD STATE ISSUED UNIFORM OR THE LIKE. SOMETHING SUCH AS A STATE ISSUED UNIFORM WOULD GO A LONG WAY IN FURTHER ISOLATING ME FROM THE SOCIETY THAT I'M EARNESTLY WORKING TOWARDS REINTEGRATING BACK INTO.

ALL THE PRECEDING PERSONAL EXAMPLES REGISTER MY OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSED RAISED BILL 1068. AS I ENTREAT YOU TO CONTINUE TO UPHOLD THE "RIGHTS" OF PEOPLE WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES AS CODIFIED IN THE CONNECTICUT PATIENT BILL OF RIGHTS. I EXPRESS MY GRATITUDE TO YOU FOR ALLOWING MY VOICE TO BE HEARD ON RAISED BILL 1068.

SINCERELY,

Mr. Joseph Conti

MR. JOSEPH CONTI.