



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

PSYCHIATRIC SECURITY REVIEW BOARD

Testimony of Ellen Weber Lachance, Executive Director Psychiatric Security Review Board Before the Judiciary Committee March 24, 2009

Good afternoon, Sen. McDonald, Rep. Lawlor and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Ellen Weber Lachance, and I am the Executive Director of the Psychiatric Security Review Board (PSRB). I am here today to speak in support of **H.B. 6343, An Act Concerning Temporary Leave Orders Issued by the Psychiatric Security Review Board.**

As you are aware, The Psychiatric Security Review Board has jurisdiction over all persons found not guilty of a crime by reason of mental disease or defect. The PSRB is composed of six members, chosen for their expertise and appointed by the Governor to serve four-year terms. Individuals are committed to the PSRB by the Superior Court and the PSRB, in turn, orders their confinement to either the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services at Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH) or a facility determined by the Department of Developmental Services. There are currently 151 individuals under the PSRB's jurisdiction.

The Board's statutory mandate is the protection of society, and that goal is accomplished through Board-ordered treatment and placement of those individuals committed to its jurisdiction. When it is determined that an acquittee can begin a safe transition to the community, the Board approves a request for Temporary Leave (Sec. 17a-587). Simply defined, Temporary Leave permits acquittees to leave CVH without staff supervision. CVH maintains primary responsibility for an acquittee's treatment while on Temporary Leave. When safe and appropriate, that acquittee is then discharged from CVH on Conditional Release (Sec. 17a-588) and primary clinical responsibility is transferred from the hospital to a community provider.

Under the PSRB's current statutory authority, the Board may order probation supervision when an acquittee is on Conditional Release, but it may not order probation supervision while Temporary Leave. The PSRB usually orders probation supervision when there is a concern regarding problem sexual behavior or

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when risk management dictates increased monitoring. On average, approximately one person per year is ordered probation supervision.

By modifying the PSRB's statute, supervision by a probation officer may be ordered earlier in the recovery process during Temporary Leave. The modification would enhance public safety by increasing supervision and risk management tools available to acquittees transitioning to the community.

This statutory change is a recommendation from the Governor's Insanity Acquittee Review Committee report dated September 10, 2008, and it has the support of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch, the Chief State's Attorney and the Office of the Public Defender. Favorable action will assist the Board in ensuring the appropriate and safe management of insanity acquittees.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee in support of this bill. I would be happy to take any questions you may have at this time.