

Testimony Before the Human Services Committee
February 23, 2010
Opposition to SB 32

Good morning/afternoon Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Melanie Green Murray and I live in Norwich, CT. Because of a chronic mental illness, that has left me with a disability and low income, I receive medication coverage through the Department of Social Services Medicaid Program.

From 1987 to 1992, I was in a state hospital, and continued to be hospitalized on shorter occasions up until a year ago. Because I am now on the right combination of medications, I have not had a psychiatric hospitalization in a year. However, the passage of SB 32 would threaten my stability. At this time, I take thirteen medications. That may sound like a lot, and it is, but they have kept me out of the hospital for the first time since 1987.

At this juncture, even with prior authorizations for SOME of my medications, I have spent no less than 10 hours per week on the phone with pharmacies, physicians and their staff getting letters that would override rejections of payment so that I can have the medication I need to lead a normal and happy life. The current legislation only calls for prior authorization on SOME medications....imagine the frustration, confusion, and loss of stability if SB 32 passed-allowing for placing ALL mental health medications on a "fail-first", preferred drug list?!!!!

Not only would it cost my stability for lack of meds, it could increase my visits to emergency rooms, \$400 per ride to the hospital if I needed emergency transportation, and the daunting cost of at least \$1500 per day

in-patient, which does not include physician consultations, medications, and billing for groups.

SB32 also proposes raising the monthly co-pay cap from \$15 to \$20....THAT may not sound like a lot, but being on a fixed income, with no cost of living increase for the next two years, paying for rent, heat, electricity, transportation, and other utilities makes it hard to pay even the \$15 per month co-pay cap. I have had to borrow money from my roommate to cover those costs. Incidentally, I do not drink, gamble, or use drugs, so I have a budget for what I need.

Respectfully, what I need is to retain my mental health so that I can stay well, stay out of the hospital, go back to work, and some day finish my degree.

Thank you for your time today. I appreciate your consideration and hope you choose to defeat SB32.

Sincerely,

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