



**GILEAD**

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*Testimony to the Planning and Development Committee*

*by Barry M. Simon, Gilead Community Services, Inc.*

**H.B. No. 5142 AN ACT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE LOCATION OF GROUP HOMES**

*February 7, 2011*

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative Gentile members of the Planning and Development Committee. My name is Barry Simon and I am the Executive Director of Gilead Community Services; Gilead is a mental health provider funded by DMHAS and DCF that has 200 employees and serves more than 600 individuals throughout Middlesex County.

I am here today to voice opposition to H.B. No. 5142 AN ACT REQUIRING PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE LOCATION OF GROUP HOMES. This legislation creates more burdens and devalues a population that already deals with a significant amount of stigma and misunderstanding. As you know, community providers are an integral part of the public/private partnership in the Purchase of Service Community healthcare system. We are the safety net that helps people live as full a life as possible. But unfortunately, at the same time the state asks us to deliver these services, it often fails to give us the funding or the backing we need to do so. Our clients need the services we offer in order to live more productive, fulfilling and healthy lives. The services we provide are essential services. If we are unable to deliver on behalf of our clients...then there are significant consequences.

The community provider system is a cost effective means of providing vital services that are an integral part of the core mission of government. I am here today on behalf of my clients, my incredible staff (part of which are 1199 union staff) and hundreds of thousands of individuals served by the community provider system to ask that you look to strengthening the community provider system as a way of addressing aspects of the growing fiscal crisis not add to the burden of more regulation and stigma. We are a viable alternative to More Costly and Restrictive Levels of Care. I am not here to pit one part of the system against another; I am here to tell you

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that we provide excellent care that saves the State money. We are part of the community we are in and all of our properties (14) have been and continue to be kept at or above the others on the street.

Community providers deliver services to over 500,000 of the state's most needy residents. Local agencies in all of your districts continue to witness under funding and increasing regulatory burden, yet everyday families, individuals and our State turn to us, at increasing rates, for the support they need to help individuals lead more productive, healthy and fulfilling lives. Having been through a number of "public hearings" to site programs, they have all resembled a witch hunt with mob mentality that significantly devalues the individuals we serve. Our clients did not wake up and ask to live the life they have, they fight every day to overcome significant obstacles. No one should have to go through a public hearing the likes that I have witnessed (I am happy to share details if you would like). You more than anyone know the inaccuracies that can be told during a public political campaign by your opponents.

Now, is a critical moment in time, higher costs, more regulation like this, and the lack of state support will mean program and service reductions at the very moment we should be looking for less costly and more productive alternatives. Non-profit community providers are part of the solution for the future of the service delivery system. We are and will continue to be a cost-effective solution to addressing the growing needs of Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens. The 500,000 Connecticut residents that use community services need you to help fix this systemic problem before it becomes their healthcare crisis, not add to the stigma that they face on a daily basis. Given adequate resources that truly fund our costs of services, we have the capacity and willingness to provide these needed services; which saves the State money and brings in federal matching funds.

I thank you for your time and would be happy to answer any questions.