



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

Dannel P. Malloy
Governor

Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN
Commissioner

Testimony by Patricia Rehmer, MSN, Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Before the Public Health Committee
March 23, 2011

Good morning Sen.Gerratana, Rep. Ritter, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. I am Commissioner Patricia Rehmer of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and I am here this morning to speak in favor of **Section 30 of HB 6618, An Act Concerning Various Revisions to Public Health Statutes**. I want to thank the Committee for your assistance in raising this bill and to the Department of Public Health for including this language in their tech bill.

Section 30 would allow DPH to have policies and procedures in place to permit individuals with opiate dependence to receive treatment in a variety of licensed substance abuse treatment facilities. This bill is proposing the availability of the medication Suboxone (also known as Buprenorphine), by prescription, in outpatient substance abuse clinics. According to the DPH regulations, outpatient substance abuse clinics are currently prohibited from prescribing this particular medication as they are typically not also licensed as either Ambulatory Detox or Chemical Maintenance facilities. Although DPH is in the process of re-writing their regulation that would allow for the prescribing of Suboxone in licensed outpatient clinics, these regulations could take many months to be finalized through the regulatory process. Suboxone has been approved by the federal government for use in the treatment of opiate dependence in any setting for a number of years as long as the prescribing physician is appropriately certified.

Up until now, methadone clinics have been where most individuals go for treatment of their opiate addiction. Again, these clinics are required to be licensed in CT by the Department of Public Health as Chemical Maintenance and Ambulatory Detox Facilities. By federal law, methadone clinics are only allowed to dispense, not prescribe, Suboxone and because of the expense, very few, if any of the CT methadone clinics dispense Suboxone.

The availability of Suboxone through outpatient substance abuse clinics would greatly expand access to this highly effective and researched medication and would provide another treatment option for individuals suffering with an opiate dependence, whether it is to heroin or to any number of addictive painkillers, within their own communities. Like any other medication, Suboxone would be obtained at any pharmacy with payment made by the individual's health insurance plan, including Medicaid. Young adults who are struggling with a short-term addiction to heroin or painkillers could go to an outpatient clinic for services in lieu of a methadone clinic.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I appreciate your consideration of this bill and would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.