

**Testimony on Senate Bill 452: AN ACT CONCERNING THE CARE AND
TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITIES**

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Good morning members of the judiciary committee. My name is Carissa Sfakios. I am a resident of Newington and a social worker with a background in outpatient mental health services.

I am here today to strongly oppose SB 452 because it violates the person centered care model that we use in Connecticut. It also violates basic human rights, HIPAA and a clients right to self- determination.

Based on my experience working with adults in a mental health setting denial, lack of insight and pre-contemplation are all common responses in individuals learning about their diagnosis. Coercive medicine is not a solution to this problem because it threatens to undermine the trust and mutual respect that is formed as a result of effective therapeutic interventions.

Medication is only one component of recovery. Therapy, case management, supportive housing and peer support work with medication management to create a wrap around approach to wellness and recovery.

Another aspect of this bill that is concerning is that it ignores many of the issues that prevent individuals from getting the medication they need. Temporary loss of benefits caused by a Medicaid spend down or redetermination can result in an individual going without medication as can restrictions in Medicaid formularies.

I have personally witnessed several clients that decompensated and ended up in the emergency room because a temporary loss of benefits resulted in not having medications and/or VNA services. Many of the individuals I worked with went without medications because they were "unapproved" under the formulary and they could not afford to pay for them out of pocket.

This legislation also threatens to disproportionately impact Medicaid recipients with a limited number of practitioners who will see them or that are forced to wait for long periods of time to get an appointment with a psychiatrist at a community based mental health agency.

I appreciate that this problem is being addressed but coercive medicine is not the answer. Thank you for hearing my testimony. I can take any questions or comments at this time.