



Testimony before the Judiciary Committee March 29, 2012

**SB 452, An Act Concerning the Care and Treatment of Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities
Submitted by: Domenique S. Thornton, Esq., Mental Health Association of CT, Inc.**

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Domenique Thornton. I am the General Counsel and Director of Public Policy for the Mental Health Association of Connecticut, Inc. (MHAC). MHAC was established in 1908, the first private nonprofit dedicated to service, education and advocacy for people experiencing mental health disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to testify regarding SB 452, An Act Concerning the Care and Treatment of Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities. As much as we understand the motivations of the State and of treatment providers to help a person with psychiatric illness gain symptom relief, through the use of medications, we must oppose the involuntary use of forced medications for a number of reasons.

1. The proposed bill does not have enough protections for individual liberty.
2. Especially in light of the recent Supreme Court Decision Gross v. Rell (SC 18548) Officially Released April 3, 2012, "a lawyer [must] zealously [assert] the client's position under the rules of the adversary system."
3. There is no discussion or requirement of discussion as to why the person is not taking their medications. Are there side effects? Is there any other way to access more intensive treatment? Are there outpatient counseling services available or other community services to assist them?

In brief, this bill provides little or no safeguards to individual right against forced medications. The statute gives no voice to the individual who is supposed to be at the center of their own recovery plan to make it successful. It seems as if this bill would like to take the easy way out to force medications with the hope that all will be well after the symptoms have been reduced. However, what the bill does not take into account is that forcing medications is in itself a traumatizing event. Who will transport the individual to where they will be medicated? Will it be the police? It sounds as if persons experiencing the reoccurrence of symptoms are being criminalized for having a psychiatric disability. Many persons with psychiatric disabilities have