

Testimony before the Judiciary Committee

March 29, 2012

Opposing SB 452 - An Act Concerning the Care and Treatment of Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Patricia Burke. As an individual who has worked with people with psychiatric disabilities for 15 years, and as a mother of a 17 year old boy with a psychiatric diagnosis, I implore you not to move this bill into law. This bill is a **fundamental denial of basic civil rights** on many levels.

It purports to create a treatment milieu in the community (not in a facility or hospital). Community treatment is a complex set of practices and responses by the client. Many studies of other states with a similar bill (Rand Corporation in particular) find **no documented evidence** that a law like this would encourage treatment, indeed, it likely would have the opposite effect. In my experience, coercion always leads to poor quality outcomes in this business.

Individuals with psychiatric disabilities have the same basic human and civil rights as any other citizen in the state of Connecticut. **To target a segment of the population who have not engaged in criminal behavior, and essentially penalize them for an illness that was not of their making, is in itself a criminal act. Stripping a citizen of a basic civil right to freedom from coercion is not acceptable.**

Funding non-profit community providers to do the work that they are so good at it, is where your efforts should lie. It is tragic that non-profits have received no additional funding in over 5 years. Enact a law that fully funds community providers so that each and every individual in this state who has a psychiatric disability can get multiple opportunities for intensive, high quality treatment.

Coercion of this type in a free society is a slippery slope to limiting freedoms in other parts of community life. It has no place in the state of Connecticut or the nation.

Sincerely,

Patricia Burke

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