

**Paul Acker**  
**Testimony Before Judiciary Committee**  
**RE: In Opposition to SB-452**  
**March 29, 2012**

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox, distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB-452, An Act Concerning the Care and Treatment of Persons with Psychiatric Disabilities.

My name is Paul Acker; I am a Co-Chair of the Keep The Promise Coalition Adult Committee, an employee at InterCommunity, Inc in East Hartford as the coordinator of their social rehabilitation clubhouse, Common Ground and a person living with a mental illness.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services made the conscious decision about a decade ago to embrace the Recovery Model for its system of care. The Recovery Model is all about empowering people living with a mental illness to make informed decisions about their life and treatment. This was a radical departure from the common practice of doing for or to a person leaving them out of decisions entirely that effect their lives.

SB-452 is counter to today's recovery practices. It turns back the clock and takes the civil liberties away from only people who are living with a mental illness, who have not been declared incompetent or a danger to themselves or others. As a nation we are quick to scold other nations that trample the civil liberties of their citizens, yet our history here with persons living with mental illness for decades upon decades is to force treatment on them. The Constitution and our ideals of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness do not have an asterisk denoting a mental health exception.

Coercion just makes treatment equate to punishment. It separates the provider from the person, making them adversaries instead of partners in the recovery process. SB-452 damages the very foundation, the relationship between the two, right from the onset. In my six years working at InterCommunity, I have yet to hear a person say, "Thank god they forced me to take meds." Instead, people tend look at stable housing or the support they received building their foundation again. They cite the relationships to peers, providers and significant others supporting them on their path of their choosing. SB-452 ignores all of these best practices and segregates persons living with a mental illness from their inalienable rights.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any of your questions.