

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Aging
February 26, 2013**

H.B. 6460 AN ACT LIMITING THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING ADULTS

This testimony was written by Nicholas Marinelli, a full-time, undergraduate student at Central Connecticut State University, and a young person in recovery from a primary diagnosis of major depressive disorder.

To the members of the Committee on Aging, I ask that you stand with me in support proposed H.B. 6460 AN ACT LIMITING THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING ADULTS.

As a young adult who is personally diagnosed with a mental illness, I feel that the Silver Alert System needs to be further revised to be the most effective in locating missing persons who are mentally impaired, while also being respectful of individuals' right to privacy. I completely agree that there is a need for assisting emotionally and mentally unstable individuals back to a location where they can feel safe and receive services. However, I cannot respect the idea of a breach in confidentiality.

Confidentiality in the mental health field is an absolute necessity. Not only does the practice of confidentiality help to minimize the opportunity for discrimination within the social context, but it also ensures that individuals seeking mental health services can trust the providers they seek out. Without delving too deep into stigma and the therapeutic relationship between patients and therapists, I want to stress the importance of both.

The common characteristic that both these factors share, in consideration of recovery from mental illness, is trust. The Silver Alert System operated by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection too often breaches the confidentiality of individuals and will impact the willingness of individuals to seek mental health treatment because there is no trust that their symptoms, diagnosis, or need for medication will remain private.

With trust on the decline, so is recovery. It's simply a positive correlation: as confidentiality's reputation goes down the drain, so does the trust in providers and the field in general. My concern is mainly in the area of young person's recovery from mental illness and how that affects my future ambitions as an individual. Confidentiality is the foundation of ethical compliance in therapeutic care.

I truly believe that **H.B. 6460 AN ACT LIMITING THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION ABOUT MISSING ADULTS** will be extremely beneficial for individuals seeking, achieving, and maintaining recovery. We need to set limits on the amount of information shared in a Silver Alert, specifically, the diagnosis, symptoms, and even the idea that an individual may or not be on medication at a certain point; this will surely be a positive step in the right direction.

I want to conclude this testimony with a message that everyone, not just those who struggle with mental illness, can understand. Privacy is a natural right. It is not earned and it certainly is not won in some existential competition. Respect those who want their information protected.

Thank You for considering my testimony.