

March 18, 2013

To: Public Health Committee

Re: **RAISED BILL NO. 1065, LCO NO. 4107**

My name is Deborah Koval and I am a substance abuse counselor and supervisor with CRT (Community Renewal Team) and I work at the CT Dept. of Parole in Hartford.

Twenty years ago, I decided that I needed a career change. At that time, I had a Bachelor's Degree in Science from Quinnipiac College with a major in Medical Technology in 1975. I was nationally registered by the American Society of Clinical Pathologists after passing a national registry exam in order to ensure that I had acquired a pool of knowledge and understanding of laboratory procedures to be called an MT (ASCP). In that way, any employer who was interested in hiring me would be assured that I had the knowledge and skill base to deliver services in a professional manner as I was bound by their ethics and Standards of Practice.

In choosing my new field of endeavor, I researched the requirements and discovered that the general public held a rather dim view of the field of Substance Abuse Counseling. It was generally believed that counselors were all former clients who had little training outside of AA meetings and even less recovery time, thus making them all less than professional. I entered that field by obtaining an Associate's Degree in Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Counseling in 1993 from Tunxis Community College. I eventually passed a written and oral exam facilitated by the Connecticut Certification Board (CCB) of CT and obtained my certification in 1996. I soon discovered that this was not enough, so to keep pace with the ever changing demands of the field, I returned to college for a Master's Degree in Community Counseling from St. Joseph College, which I obtained in 1999. With the advent of my Master's Degree, I became simultaneously eligible for an LADC and an LPC. Again, I have worked hard to obtain the education and experience needed to ensure that I remain on top of my game and at the forefront of my field.

Anyone who might be interested in hiring me can look at my resume and be assured that I meet the minimum standards that will be required to fulfill any duties assigned to me as an LADC, or an LPC. I am bound by the Ethical Standards and Best Practices of my chosen field and am in a position to supervise clinicians and students alike. I attend continuing education lectures and workshops to keep my knowledge base current as required by the Department of Public Health.

Throughout my career, I have been proud of my achievements and that of my field as we have gained credibility in the counseling profession. We are different from social workers and licensed professional counselors as we possess specialized knowledge and training in the identification and treatment of substance use disorders. It is important that our profession stands strong in the ~~credentialing~~ and licensure process and not fall back into lower standards that existed 25 years ago.

I end with a question....."How confident would you feel if you called for an electrician and while describing to him what was going on with your kitchen light and outlets, he told you that he had a degree in Fine Arts, but had been carrying his boss's tool box for the past 5-years and had "seen it all," therefore he was now qualified to fix your problem ?

Thank you for raising this bill to support licensed addiction counselors in CT.

Deborah Koval, LADC