

3/6/13

RE: Access to Substance Use Treatment for Privately Insured Youth Public Testimony

Dear Legislative Program Review and Investigation Committee,

My name is Greg Williams and I am a current resident of Danbury, CT. I am a young person in recovery from drugs and alcohol for over 10 years since age 17. I initiated my sustained recovery as a result of access to quality adolescent treatment outside of the state of CT. As my family was going through the most difficult time in their lives, they chose this treatment option after I was involved in a near fatal car accident. It was the best option for me because even though we were privately insured and had "good" health benefits, it was clear that the options for treatment of adolescents in CT were limited. The insurance company authorized only 5 days of treatment while the professional health care provider's assessment recommended that I needed at least 4 weeks of intensive inpatient care. So facing this baffling reality, my family did what any family would do if they had the ways and means to do it: **They paid up front for the recommended treatment in an attempt to save my life and opted to fight the insurance battle at a later point in time.**

Our family was lucky, we won my battle with adolescent addiction, and it took another 3 years but we also eventually won our battle with the insurance company through the external appeal process. Unfortunately, this is the story of only a few. For the majority of CT adolescents struggling with substance use disorders their families are unable to access the proper care for their health problem.

- *"Over 90% of people with abuse/dependence started using under the age of 18 and met criteria by age 20. Treatment and recovery supports in the first 10 years of use (basically adolescents & young adult hood) is associated with cutting the years of use by decades and key to reducing long term costs to society (Dennis, M. – Chestnut)."*

Connecticut Turning To Youth and Families is a statewide non-profit organization made up of families and young people in recovery from substance use disorders committed to changing the discrimination this population continues to face from healthcare payers. Our board and constituents fully support the PRI study recommendations as a step in the right direction for having insurance privileges protected for this extremely vulnerable population that has been marginalized for decades. We believe that through giving professionals the care decisions for young people with substance use disorders not only will those families benefit directly, but our entire State will benefit in significant direct and indirect ways. All of this is well documented in the full evidence-based report.

Members of legislature we urge you to please pass these bills. Future generations and lives depend on it!

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony on behalf of The Board of Directors and the community stakeholders we represent,

Greg Williams, Board Member, Connecticut Turning to Youth and Families

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