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Statement of Brian S. Becker
State Representative for the 19th Assembly District
before the
Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly
February 20, 2013
in support of
HB 5727
An Act Concerning the Time for Parental Notification When a Child is Admitted to a Hospital for Diagnosis or Treatment of a Mental Disorder

Chairman Gerratana, Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Welch, Ranking Member Srinivasan, and the other distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for raising and taking the time to hear testimony on HB 5727, An Act Concerning the Time for Parental Notification When a Child is Admitted to a Hospital for Diagnosis or Treatment of a Mental Disorder.

During the course of a Program Review and Investigations Committee ("PRI") hearing on a report entitled Adolescent Health, the Committee noted that the report (on p.94 in a section entitled, "Inpatient Mental Health Care") mentions that:

> Under Connecticut law, anyone 16 or older can commit to inpatient hospitalization for treatment of a mental disorder. Further, a minor who is 14 or 15 years old may be admitted for inpatient mental health services without consent of his or her parents if such child consents in writing. If this occurs, parents must be notified within <u>five days</u> of such admission. [Emphasis added].

Section 17a-79 of the Connecticut General Statutes is the statutory reference for the language cited in the PRI report. The five-day period during which a parent must be notified of a 14 or 15 year-old child self-admitting to a hospital for treatment of a mental disorder without parental consent struck PRI's committee members as an awfully long period of time. As a parent, I know that I would be sick with worry if I did not know the whereabouts of my 14 or 15 years old child for more than a few hours, never mind for five days.

I have been unable to find anyone who can explain why the statute allows the hospital five days to notify a parent. Some have speculated that it might be related to cases of abuse, but telling an parent that his or her child is safe in a hospital setting would not, in and of itself, endanger the child or return the child to the abusive parent's custody. I proposed 24 hours as an alternative notification time period and respectfully suggest the committee use that time period unless it hears testimony with a compelling reason justifying a different one. Thank you.