

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
PSYCHIATRIC SECURITY REVIEW BOARD

Testimony of Sylvia Cancela
Psychiatric Security Review Board
Before the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee
March 25, 2014

Good day, Senator Looney, Representative Williams and distinguished members of the Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee.

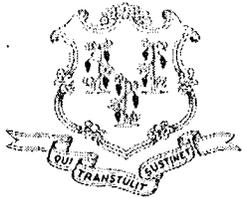
My name is Sylvia Cancela and I am currently the Public Member of the Psychiatric Security Review Board. I want to thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today as Governor Malloy's nominee for reappointment to the PSRB.

I am a small business owner and a recently retired firefighter with a long history of volunteering for organizations, and working on projects that positively impact the community and the State of Connecticut.

I had been involved with issues of disability and ability for many years when I came to the PSRB, in 1995. I have degrees in Psychology and Sociology and spent 7 years in the corporate arena, partnering with organizations to develop products, services and promotion for individuals with disabilities.

When I was first asked to serve on the PSRB, I was intrigued by the Board's mission – to preside over persons who are found not guilty of a crime by reason of insanity – and more important, to determine the level of treatment, supervision and placement required in order to ensure that these acquittees do not pose a danger to themselves, their victims or the community.

PSRB acquittees pose an additional challenge as their disabilities have caused them to harm themselves, others and their communities. That's where the unique combination of expertise and depth of experience on the Board is so critical to finding the best solutions for everyone involved through education, medication and if possible, accommodation.



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Because the primary mandate of the PSRB is public safety, we are so careful to balance issues of community and victim concerns when considering acquttees' re-integration into any community. It is not an easy or quick process, but one that requires many small, detailed steps, continuous assessment, working with hospital, community and State resources.

After nearly 20 years of reading thousands of pages of testimony and learning the careful process the Board goes through to deliberate each and every case, I have a much greater understanding of the impact that mental illness – one of the issues of our time – has on society, and the responsibility it places on me to protect all parties for the public good.

I am proud to serve on the Psychiatric Security Review Board. Each member of the Board respects and appreciates the significant public trust that has been placed in us to ensure the safety of the citizens of Connecticut.

Although the work is time consuming and deals with the most tragic of circumstances, I look forward to reappointment to the Board and the opportunity to continue to serve with its superb administrative team.

Thank you for allowing me to address the Committee today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time concerning my background or my work with the Psychiatric Security Review Board.