



## CT ASSOCIATION for ADDICTION PROFESSIONALS

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### **Testimony on SB 471: An Act Concerning Mental And Behavioral Health Services** Public Health Committee March 19, 2014

As the Treasurer of the CT Association for Addiction Professionals (CAAP), representing 779 Licensed Alcohol & Drug Counselors (LADC), I am asking the Public Health Committee to delete Section 2 (C) of SB 471. In particular the following addition ..... or (C) another subject approved by the commissioner, provided the semester hours in a subject other than counseling or a counseling-related subject were completed or in progress on or before July 1, 2013. This grandfathering clause is asking you to allow those who do not have, or did not get, a master's degree in a behavioral health area prior to July 1, 2013, be allowed to substitute other courses, not necessarily counseling, in lieu of counseling specific courses as part of the licensing requirements for LADC. This is another attempt to circumvent the requirement for a master's degree in a behavioral health related field. For too many years Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselors (LADC) have been treated like 'second class citizens' within the helping profession. MD's, Social Workers, Psychologist, Nurses, Etc, would never accept this amendment, (Section 2 (C) of SB 471), if this was proposed for their professions. People with mental health, substance abuse and other addictions, need qualified professionals to help them with their challenges. Please do not lower the current standards and or requirements.

This section 2 (C) of SB 471 has the consequence of reversing legislation passed by the 2013 legislature. Last year CAAP fought to assure that individuals seeking to attain an LADC have a degree commensurate with other licensed behavioral health practitioners (social workers, marriage and family counselors and licensed professional counselors). We were delighted when your committee agreed that allowing practitioners to apply for a license in addiction counseling *without* graduate courses in counseling would be a step backward for the profession and those seeking licensure. In addition it would negatively impact the treatment of those seeking treatment for addictions as it would decrease the knowledge and competency assurance that is implicit in the current law.

Allowing this section to move forward would also decrease the ability of LADCs to be compensated with public and private funders and would *not* meet the requirements outlined in Title V of the Affordable Care Act, The Healthcare Workforce, SEC. 5002:

The term 'mental health service professional' means an individual with a graduate or post-graduate degree from an accredited institution of higher education in psychiatry, psychology, and other areas like ....., social work, ..... substance abuse disorder prevention and treatment, marriage and family ..... or professional counseling.

In short it would allow those with degrees obtained on or before July 1, 2013, - those with degrees in areas other than counseling (as those mentioned above) - to apply for an exemption from the counseling courses requirement.

As CAAP's mission statement reads ...our mission is to **provide advocacy** and education for addiction focused professionals. The general and dedicated all volunteer board and committee members work diligently to **support and promote the advancement of our profession**. If this section 2 ( C ) of SB 471 is allowed to go forward CAAP would be remiss in our mission.

**Again, I am asking that Section 2 (C) of SB 471 be deleted.**