

Kelly Nealy

Testimony Re:

Raised Bill No. 471

AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES.

I am submitting my written testimony against Raised Bill no. 471 AN ACT CONCERNING MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES. This bill poses a multitude of problems not only from a state perspective but also from a parent perspective. The Connecticut Mental Health system needs to be corrected before a bill like No. 471 should be introduced much less enacted into law. The Raised bill no. 471 as written leaves too much room for error and improper labeling that could cause serious life long problems for children and families. I have had direct experience with the Mental Health System in this state and it is very flawed. Not only is there a lack of services readily available to those who truly need them, finding these services can take months or even in some cases years.

I have a child with multiple medical conditions and a speech delay. At one point he had been diagnosed with epilepsy and was on an anti-epileptic medication for a little over a year. During that time he experienced side effects that were so rare less than 1% of individuals have reported them. They did not present immediately and instead came only over time in the form of behavioral problems that could also mimic a mental health problem to the untrained eye. After a couple months of working with doctors and clinical psychologists that medication was discontinued and he is now 100% back to himself with none of the behaviors that were present while on medication.

I implore the members of the committee to research and fully understand Mental Health in the state of Connecticut before going forward with this bill. There are many factors including side effects from medication as stated above that could lead someone to believe there is a mental health problem when there is not. School officials nor pediatrician's are equipped to make that determination or accurately conduct a mental health screening. I am respectfully requesting if this bill is continued to be considered that the provisions within it are revised. I think it is more reasonable for a school to first be required to have documented justification of any concerns present with a child to warrant an assessment to be conducted. If deemed warranted parents should then be notified through an established notification process and be afforded the right to have the child evaluated by a qualified professional of their choice.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and ask all members of the committee to please Vote NO to Raised Bill No. 471.

Sincerely,

Kelly Nealy