

Public Health Committee

March 19, 2014

Testimony Re: **SB 471** An Act Concerning Mental and Behavioral Health Services

Request to Delete and Remove Section 2 (C)

I am Roby Rowe, LADC, LMFT, Public Policy Chair of the Connecticut Association of Addiction Professionals, which represents addiction counselors in the state. Let me first express my appreciation for your work in the passage of the 2013 provisions strengthening the statute providing for the licensure of Alcohol and Drug Counselors (LADC's.) As a result of this action, Connecticut consumers are ensured a high quality addiction counseling workforce, and LADC's are ensured recognition as full behavioral health/mental health providers under the ACA.

I am alarmed, however, that so soon after taking this constructive step, there would be consideration of a measure that goes further backward than merely reversing last year's work. This is because of the lack of end date on Sec. 2 (C). It would have the effect of removing us (LADC's) from standing as equals under the ACA with our peers in Social Work, Professional Counseling, and Marriage and Family Therapy, all of whose licenses require completion of a master's degree *in a behavioral health field*.

Substance use disorders are behind a large portion of visits to the Emergency Departments across this state, as well as visits to Primary Care and other Physicians. Enormous amounts of public and private funds are expended dealing with their consequences in courts (including family court), corrections facilities, schools, and a myriad of social service agencies. Most other professionals are unprepared to deal with the substance abuser, and some find them distasteful and prefer to avoid them. A newly licensed physician friend of mine said of his emergency department work, that he was well prepared to handle the mangled bodies clinging to the edges of life which he routinely treated, but not prepared to sort through the frequent medication requests which may or may not be based in addiction.

These disorders, which are so immensely complex and have such a great effect on society at large, deserve the best prepared workforce we have to offer. No other professionals as well prepared as LADC's to do this critical work. The standards for the LADC license need to be kept as high as possible to best serve the citizens of this state.

Please maintain the high standards the public counts on by removing Section 2 (C) from SB 471.

I appreciate your consideration.

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