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**TESTIMONY OF JAN VANTASSEL, ESQ.
INSURANCE COMMITTEE
MARCH 17, 2014**

**RE: SUPPORT FOR SB-1085 AN ACT CONCERNING HEALTH INSURANCE
COVERAGE FOR MENTAL OR NERVOUS CONDITIONS**

My name is Jan VanTassel and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), which provides legal services to low income persons with serious mental health conditions. As part of my responsibilities, I've done presentations and had discussions with individuals and family members about their experience with the mental health system. I have listened to many frustrated people, particularly parents of young adults, who have not been able to access the supports or services that their son or daughter needs because their insurance will not cover it or imposes arbitrary time limits on services.

Obviously, this frustration was also communicated to the task forces that the state established following the Sandy Hook tragedy. Three of them specifically identified the coverage gap between publicly funded mental health services and those covered by state regulated private insurance as a barrier to treatment. Equally significant is the fact that the services covered by the state are evidence-based interventions and supports that have been demonstrated to be cost-effective and avoid more expensive state services, such as hospital stays.

The purpose of SB-1085 is a simple one: to clarify that the scope of services covered by state regulated private insurers should be consistent with those covered by the state. Clarifying the statute in this manner would expand access to evidence practices, eliminate the incentive to shift costs to the state, and address a whole lot of frustration among parents who are struggling to meet the needs of their children in a fragmented and complicated system. This is not the only solution, but it is a significant step in the right direction.

I urge you to support SB-1085.