

**Testimony before the State of Connecticut Planning & Development Committee**

**February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Miller, & esteemed members of the Planning & Development Committee.

My name is Thomas Burr, from Glastonbury, CT. I am a current Board Officer and past president of the nonprofit Manchester Affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. I am also the parent of an adult child who is in recovery from bipolar disorder, after 8 years worth of repeated hospitalizations, incarcerations, and homelessness. Currently he is living on his own; he is working, and doing very well.

**I am here today to speak in opposition to Proposed H.B. No. 5618 AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY-BASED RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES, and in opposition to Proposed H.B. No. 6483 AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY GROUP HOME DISTRIBUTION**

Our Affiliate strongly opposes most of these proposed changes because they would open the door to discriminating against people based on their health status and needs. No one has the information of who their neighbors are when they move into a house or apartment. Why should people with additional health needs be treated any different?

And equally, if not more, important, people identified as having a psychiatric disability are a protected class under the Connecticut constitution and have protections under both state and federal laws. Making their health information public would violate these laws. The State and municipalities would face legal challenges based on laws such as the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Adding additional barriers to supporting people to live in the community with relevant services and supports will not address our citizen's needs AND make budget issues worse, by adding about \$1,200 PER day PER person to the state's expenses.

Please note: People with a mental illness who have a stable home environment through supportive housing and other community based housing such as group homes, will be able to enter recovery, eventually getting jobs in their community, and therefore providing tax revenue to the State; becoming in fact an asset to the State and their community. Any efforts to block or undermine the creation of the continuum of community based living options is completely counter-productive to both helping people with psychiatric disabilities, as well as saving scarce taxpayer funds. Finally, we sincerely appreciate the wonderful job that the city of Manchester has done and continues to do in welcoming people who benefit from these types of facilities into their town!

**IN SUMMARY: I am asking the Legislature to vote NO on H.B. No. 5618 and H.B. No. 6483.**

Thank you. I will now gladly answer any questions you have.

Respectfully submitted,

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