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HB5531 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS
AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS.

Dear Senator Coleman, and respective members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Luz Feliz and I am a resident of New Britain, Connecticut.

I am testifying today because I'm against H.B. 5531. The reason I am against this bill is because I feel that people should have the right to choose what happens in their treatment, without being punished.

In my life I have experienced situations similar to what would happen if this bill were to pass. I would have definitely been an ideal candidate for forced treatment.

However, since I have been given choices about what is available to me in the community, I am now fully in charge of my life.

Today, I am a Young Adult Warmline Operator with Advocacy Unlimited, and I co-facilitate a Writing Workshop at Toivo. Since becoming a part of this community, I have been able to find alternative ways of dealing with past trauma that I haven't been able to resolve through any other approaches, including medication.

It has been nearly a year, and I have regularly attended Yoga, the Alternatives to Suicide Peer Support Group, and Women's Groups like Beyond Anger and Violence. Being with others who are engaged in healthy lifestyles and on their own road to recovery helps me remain hopeful. Throughout the last year, I have finally become okay with being me.

It is important that I share with you, how far I have come so that you can understand that there are less intrusive yet still beneficial options that are not made available to people when they are being discharged from the hospital. Honestly, I don't even think that treatment providers are aware of what is available in the community.

Last July, I was inpatient at the Hospital of Central Connecticut. While there, I was had a difficult time and engaged in self-harm. No one knew that this had happened, but I informed a staff member two days later because I thought they'd understand. At that point he called security, and told me that I could choose. I could choose to be restrained and forcibly medicated, or I could voluntarily allow them to sedate me. In that moment, it felt like they were punishing me. Even though, I was perfectly calm, and asking for help.

This is just one incident that occurred during this single hospital stay that demonstrates how inhumane our current delivery system operates. This legislation will only make things worse.