



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

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GOVERNOR

MIRIAM DELPHIN-RITTMON, PH.D.
COMMISSIONER

Testimony by Miriam Delphin-Rittmon
Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Before the Public Health Committee

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. I am Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), and I am here today to respectfully request your support of Raised Bill 5456, AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES FOR REVISIONS TO THE MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES STATUTES.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) is the 2013 update to the American Psychiatric Association (APA) classification and diagnostic tool. The DSM serves as a universal authority for psychiatric diagnosis in the United States. Behavioral health disorders, including those related to substance use, are defined in the Diagnostic Statistical Manual. The language change in this bill reflects the current terminology used to classify substance use disorders (vs. substance *abuse* disorders).

This change in language is important, not only as it relates to consistency with the most recent changes made in the DSM-5. Language can frame an issue. The use of appropriate language can positively impact the self-perception of an individual with a substance use disorder as well as influence the culture of recovery in the environment.

Over the years DMHAS and the people we serve have been working to change the stigma and discrimination individuals with mental health and substance use disorders face. Stigma and discrimination can often be barriers to accessing treatment, recovery supports and full citizenship. Using intentional language, or person first language, that respects the worth and dignity of all persons promotes recovery by reducing discrimination.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Favorable action on this bill will impact stigma and discrimination faced by individuals grappling with substance use disorders for years to come. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding this proposal.