

State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

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Testimony in Support of
**HB5441: AN ACT REQUIRING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR LONG-TERM
ADDICTION TREATMENT**
Insurance and Real Estate Committee
January 7, 2017

Co-Chairs Senator Larson, Senator Kelly, Representative Scanlon; Vice Chairs Representative de la Cruz, Senator Fasano, Senator Hartley; Ranking Member Representative Sampson; and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, it is no secret that the nation and Connecticut face a crisis in opioid addiction. While we may disagree about the avenue in which someone becomes an addict, opioid dependency is complicated and absolutely requires long term treatment. We may all know someone who is battling this demon and this bill will help slay it, for thousands of our beloved residents.

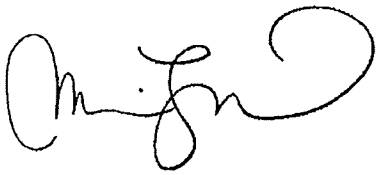
I first learned about opiate addiction over 25 years ago when a good friend of mine started down a dangerous path. First it started with OxyContin. She then started crushing tablets and snorting them. Next, she isolated herself from those who loved her and couldn't get out of bed without making that her morning routine. She then lost her car, her house and her self-worth. Homeless and broke, heroin was cheap and easy. I finally reconnected with her over the last few years and while I am so happy that she finally broke free of this horrific cycle, we know sadly, many don't.

I have spoken to recovering addicts and their parents, researched and have witnessed real stories of addiction. Television shows like Intervention provide an uncomfortable glimpse that we know all too well: opiates and heroin are killing our friends and neighbors. The drug reacts with and literally changes the brain chemistry of those who use. The cravings described to me are like nothing I can imagine and require much longer than 30 days of treatment.

There are many resources available to this committee and the legislature to address this long term recovery need in a collaborative way. The Alcohol and Drug Policy Council has been working with stakeholders across the state, including the insurance industry. They have a lot of data that would be useful and can be accessed here: <http://www.ct.gov/dmhas/cwp/view.asp?q=334676>. As a member of the council, I am impressed with the body of work that so many have contributed to.

While I generally loathe unfunded mandates on our business community, this one is just too important not to consider. The crafting will require cooperation and language that is both acceptable to our important insurance industry and contain achievable outcomes to extend the length of stay for those who are battling an addiction that we wouldn't wish on our worst enemy.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ziobron". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Representative Ziobron
State Representative
34th District