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HB 6887 An Act Expanding Coverage for Mental Health Care Services and Substance Abuse Services

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Kati Mapa, Interim Executive Director, ERMHB

Good evening Senator Kelly, Senator Larson, Representative Scanlon, and members of the Insurance and Real Estate committee.

My name is Kati Mapa, I am the Interim Executive Director of the Eastern Regional Mental Health Board, and I'm a registered voter in the city of Norwich. I am writing to you today to testify in support of HB 6887 An Act Expanding Coverage for Mental Health Care Services and Substance Abuse Services. This bill would expand the types of services that are reimbursable by insurance, particularly peer support and case management services, two evidence-based services currently available to only some residents of Connecticut.

In my role at the Eastern Regional Mental Health Board, I often receive phone calls from individuals who are seeking mental health and substance abuse services for themselves or family members or friends; many times, these individuals are overwhelmed by the complexity of the service system in our state. When the caller has public insurance and is eligible for services sponsored by the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, it is fairly easy to refer him or her to an agency that offers a variety of services, including case managers and peer support specialists in addition to clinicians and prescribers. This array of options and the choice that it affords can be very helpful for the individual's recovery. However, when the caller has private insurance, it is much more difficult to find non-clinical supports for the individual.

I support the concept of this bill, that peer supports, case management, and other non-clinical supports should be more broadly accessible beyond the Medicaid and state-operated system. This is an issue of parity – individuals with private insurance should have access to the same supports that those with public insurance are able to access.

I hope that the committee will agree to allow this important conversation to move forward, so that the stakeholders involved can have a voice in crafting a bill that would increase access to evidence-based, important services that encourage and facilitate recovery for individuals living with mental health or substance abuse concerns.

Thank you for your hard work and thank you for your time. If you have any questions for me, I would be happy to answer them. I can be reached at 860-886-0030 or at the following email address: kmapa.ermhb@gmail.com.

Best,

Kati Mapa, MSW
Interim Executive Director