

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

Submitted By: Celeste Mattingly, LCSW, West Hartford, CT

I, Celeste E. Mattingly, LCSW am a person in recovery with over 32 years' experience as an active member of a number of 12-step fellowships. I can assure this body that no matter how much training these peer support advocacy groups claim they can provide- it will always pale in comparison to Licensed Clinical Professional's whether Social Work or Psychology. These groups that are now training their members to be coaches, advocates, and peer supports are already getting the state and state-funded agencies to pay them. Thus, they are already undermining the value of Licensed Professionals in the community. I believe they are also in violation of the traditions of the 12-step themselves, and they are undermining the value of the tried-and-true sponsorship experience.

I worked very hard to accomplish what I have in my 32 years' of being in recovery. When I first got clean I tested in at 5th grade math and English in spite of having completed three years of UCONN in the 70's. It took 7 years of help from rehabilitation agencies, and many Licensed Professionals for my body, mind, and spirit to heal enough to return to school. At the age of 40 I truly started a new life, struggling all the way to become a licensed helper -the highest most beneficial way that anyone can be. I shudder to think what I might have missed out on if the standards for being a helper in recovery were a low as these bodies are making them.

I am also a member of the National Association of Social Workers, CT Chapter and have been informed by NASW/CT that the association is in concurrence with me that peer support services should not be insurance reimbursable, for reasons stated here, as well as it negatively changes the nature of peer support.

Please vote against bill 6887. Do not lower the standards of the real helpers that struggling newcomers deserve.

Thank you,

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