
**NORTHWEST
REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH BOARD, INC.**

Central Naugatuck Valley Catchment Area Council #20
Housatonic Mental Health Catchment Area Council #21
Northwest Mental Health Catchment Area Council #22

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**Testimony for the Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 16, 2017**

**In favor of proposed HB # 6887:
AA Expanding Coverage for Mental Health Care Services and Substance Abuse Services**

Good morning Senator Larson, Senator Kelly, Rep. Scanlon and members of the committee. Particularly I would like to recognize those members of the committee who represent towns in Region Five: Sen. Hartley, Rep. Sampson and Rep. Berthel.

My name is Janine Sullivan-Wiley and I am the Executive Director of the Northwest Regional Mental Health Board, Inc. - Region Five in Connecticut. As background, the Regional Boards were **established by state statute (Sec. 17a-484) 42 years ago to provide a community-based assessment, planning and oversight entity for mental health services.** Our region covers the 43 towns of Northwest Connecticut. We represent all stakeholders, and work in collaboration with other entities and regions, assuring that we understand the scope of an issue, whether it is local, regional or state-wide.

I am in support of the HB 6887 because of its requirement that insurance policies provide coverage for case management and peer support services.

These are services that are incredibly supportive to people with mental illness and/or substance use disorders who live in the community.

They are now often (*but not often enough!*) provided to individuals who receive care through the public system – through DMHAS-funded programs. They are NOT available to people with private insurance. Gaps such as these can shift people from private insurance to the public sector. That is not fair to people who pay insurance premiums and it is not fair to the taxpayers of the state.

Specifically I would like to cite the value of peer supports. They are typically less expensive than many clinical services and yet can be the most essential part of a person entering into and maintaining recovery. Just today they were the only support that was possible for a family and individual in need in our region.

Peer supports provide hope.
They foster and support recovery in our communities.
They are sometimes the only effective method for engagement.

Thank you for proposing to expand coverage for these effective and cost-effective services.

