

Marcelino, Pamela

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Subject: Bill HB 6887

February 16, 2017

Jeanne H. Proctor

Good morning, Senator Kelly, Senator Larson, Representative Scanlon, and distinguished members of the Insurance Committee:

My name is Jeanne Proctor and I am a resident of Guilford, CT. I am here to speak on HB 6887, An Act Expanding Coverage for Mental Health Care Services and Substance Abuse Services.

Our son suffers from schizophrenia. He has been in and out of the hospital and in and out of apartments and group homes over these last fifteen years. It has been a difficult journey for him and for us, his family.

Often with illnesses such as his, once someone is released from the hospital he struggles to maintain health, find support to understand his illness and help him with life skills, medication compliance, and services provided around housing and supported employment. He either ends up in the basement of our home or in a homeless shelter. He often falls into a cycle where care becomes too complicated for him to navigate and he ends up in crisis and back in the hospital, demoralized and hopeless.

This bill could make a difference and break this destructive cycle. Peer Services, Care Coordination, and Case Management all work in conjunction with psychotherapy and can save insurance companies and our families money, too. Peer support has been the most helpful tool for our son to understand his illness, manage symptoms, and most importantly, even give him a sense of community and dignity. In the end, these are the services that keep him out of crisis and out of the hospital.

For example: based on the research in a UCONN study, these services can decrease incarcerations, youth homelessness, psychiatric-related hospitalizations, and they help increase employment and health.

In NAMI Shoreline we volunteer and educate hundreds of families to understand mental illnesses, but they still struggle to find services to maintain any stability or hope for their family members. Often their loved ones suffer from dual diagnosis and they are unable to find care. Families live in a state of stress and crisis often leading to bankruptcy or divorce. The entire family unit becomes shattered. Yes, psychiatrists provide medication to manage symptoms, but the wrap around services and supports needed to redefine their lives are difficult to secure. We need peer specialists and care coordinators with training to connect with our loved ones and guide them in the difficult journey of recovery.

Today our son is living independently and it the peer groups and services that keep him stable and on a path of hope.

I urge you to support important services for people with mental health and/or substance use disorders.

Thank you for considering my perspective.

Jeanne Proctor

Eastern CT University Supervisor

NAMI Shoreline BOD

Guilford CT