

My name is Marc Rabinowitz and I am a resident of Ridgefield CT. As a father of person who suffers from Serious Mental Illness and an Instructor in the National Alliance of Mental Illness (“NAMI”) Family to Family program and Monthly Support Group meetings I have firsthand experience of the pain and suffering families go through in trying to secure care for a loved one. NAMI’s Family to Family course is designed to help all family members understand and support their loved one living with mental illness, while maintaining their own well-being. The course includes information on illnesses such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, major depression and other mental health conditions.

I believe my experience provides me a unique perspective pertaining to House Bill 6887, AN ACT EXPANDING COVERAGE FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES. The bills provision requiring insurance coverage for case managers and peer support services are key elements to a person’s recovery.

Mental Health America (MHA) – founded in 1909 – is the nation's leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans. MHA has stated that Peer Support services are available in all 50 states and Medicaid reimbursable in 35, peer support is considered a best practice by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Established in the public mental health system and moving into the private sector, the research shows that peers improve outcomes. Peer support services have been shown to:

- Reduce symptoms and hospitalizations
- Increase social support and participation in the community
- Decrease lengths of hospital stays and costs of services
- Improve well-being, self-esteem, and social functioning
- Encourage more thorough and longer-lasting recoveries

Regardless of the setting or role, we know that peer supporters actively involved in a person’s recovery can make all the difference. Based on this information I strongly encourage you to act on approving legislation that would place commercial insurance on parity with the 35 States that currently reimburse for such services.

According to the Commission for Case Management Certification (“CCMC”) case management has never been more relevant than it is in today’s changing health care environment. Our healthcare system is seeing an evolution of care that focuses on whole-patient health and coordinated delivery—two characteristics that land squarely in the professional case manager’s domain CCMC provides Board certification, achieved by earning the Commission’s CCM® credential, is the next step in the professional case manager’s developmental path, demonstrating that the case manager possesses the education, skills, knowledge, and experience required to render appropriate services delivered according to sound principles of practice. The CCM is the oldest and only research-based case manager certification, recognized broadly for its rigorous examination.

Today's case managers are employed by hospitals, physician practices, health plans, workers' compensation organizations, rehabilitation facilities, behavioral health companies, disease management organizations and in independent practice. We see case management as an area of specialty practice within nursing, social work, vocational rehabilitation and other human services professions. We believe that everyone benefits when clients reach their optimum level of wellness, self-management, and functional capability: the clients being served; their families and caregivers; the health care delivery system; and the various payer sources.

The above explains why case managers are so important and why these costs should be reimbursable through commercial insurance. Since our mental health system is fragmented helping people who suffer with Serious Mental Illness is a time consuming job that is often left to the caregiver. Caregivers are not experienced in providing this type of Support and in my opinion not a role a caregiver should assume as Serious Mental Illness is a chronic illness and treatment protocols are complex. Having a father, mother or relative with no experience assume the role of case manager does not help the person who is ill. Fathers, mothers, spouses and friends should not be placed in this position. It strains relationships which makes recovery for the ill person more difficult.

I commend you for reviewing these roles as possibilities for reimbursement and would be happy to work with your committee on defining the roles and responsibilities of these important professionals in a person's recovery. By using the help of a therapist, psychiatrist, peer support services and a case manager and having these costs by covered by commercial insurance provides a necessary step in the right direction.

These services are critical to a person's recovery and not having them reimbursable by commercial insurance reduces a person's chance of recovery.

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

Thank you for considering my perspective.