

Testimony before the Insurance Committee

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

In Support

February 16, 2017

Michael Scanlon

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

My name is Michael Scanlon and I am a resident of East Hampton. I am here to speak on House Bill 6887, An Act Expanding Coverage for Mental Health Care Services and Substance Abuse Services.

I speak to you all today as a young person who has direct lived experience in relation to this bill. My recovery journey started at four years old, when on a family vacation, I fell and suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury. Because of that, I live with anxiety and other health challenges.

24 years later as I stand before you since that accident, what people today don't see were the years of hopelessness and isolation I endured, or the pain my parents and siblings endured as existing modalities of treatment were not effective. I remember being at my first job out of high school and having an anxiety attack, feeling hopeless and alone with no options. It happened again as an adult but this time it was different, I had someone who cared, who understood, a peer.

I truly would not be here before you today without community based services. There wasn't peer support available when I was younger, and in a time of urgent need. I can only imagine how much easier my journey would have been, because peers provide something that we desperately need – Hope. Hope, that we aren't alone. Hope, that you are met with understanding and validation in your time of need.

Peer Specialists have been proven to have many benefits, including lowered overall cost of services and increased quality of life outcomes. Having peer specialists as a reimbursable service would extend the opportunity for recovery to many people in need.

Hartford is commonly known as the “Insurance Capitol of The World”. Insurance is all about protection – knowing that no matter what happens, you will be okay. Supporting the expansion of Peer Support into insurance would give immense opportunity for recovery and healing for our state. I know you all have great pressure on your shoulders as we work to achieve progress and practicality for Connecticut. It is my belief that by supporting this bill, you can achieve both.

Thank you.