



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Insurance and Real Estate Committee

March 5, 2019

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
860-509-7101**

House Bill #5270 - An Act Concerning Peer Support Specialists and Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Outpatient Peer Support Services Provided by Certified Peer Support Specialists

The Department of Public Health (DPH) opposes House Bill #5270, which would require the Department to adopt regulations to provide for the certification and education of peer support specialists and specify the peer support services these individuals may provide. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

This bill would essentially require the Department to establish a scope of practice that includes the types of services peer support specialists may provide, and to determine the education requirements for someone to become certified as a peer support specialist. The scope of practice process established by the legislature in CGS Sections 19a-16d through 19a-16f created a mechanism for any profession to request a new scope of practice. The Department has not received such a request from any person or entity acting on behalf of peer support specialists pursuant to these statutes.

Furthermore, there are a number of organizations that already provide certification for peer support specialists or similar titles. In Connecticut, for example, the Connecticut Certification Board (CCB) offers a certification for peer recovery specialists.ⁱ National organizations that provide similar peer support specialist certification include, but are not limited to, Mental Health Americaⁱⁱ and NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals.ⁱⁱⁱ

Additionally, the Department is unable to establish and regulate this new certification category within existing resources. Therefore, this proposal would create an unbudgeted fiscal impact for the Department.

Should the Committee move forward with legislation regarding peer support specialists, the Department respectfully recommends language to allow for statutory recognition, which would establish requirements for the use of the title "certified peer support specialist". Additionally, the Department recommends establishing title protection based on certification from existing certifying bodies. For reference regarding statutory authority, Chapter 383f of the CGS defines "music therapy" and "music therapist", including the certification required for someone to refer to themselves as a "certified music therapist" in this state.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. The Department recognizes the importance of addressing the opioids crisis in Connecticut and is ready to work with the committee on this bill or others in pursuit of solutions.

ⁱ <https://www.ctcertboard.org/certifications-renewals>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/national-certified-peer-specialist-ncps-certification-get-certified>

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ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.naadac.org/ncprss>

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