



Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon, and Esteemed Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer **strong support for H.B. 5254- An Act Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder and H.B. 5256- An Act Concerning Required Health Insurance Coverage for Detoxification and Substance Abuse Services.**

The Connecticut Counseling Association (CCA) represents over 450 counselors in a wide variety of settings that serve individuals suffering from mental health and addiction. The mission of the CCA is to support and advocate for counselors and the counseling profession through promoting professional identity, providing opportunities for professional development and networking, and offering resources to better support those we serve.

The CCA is in full support of both HB5254 and HB5256 which would mandate insurance coverage for medication assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid disorder, provide family counseling and intervention services and provide coverage for other detoxification services.

It is an established fact in the treatment community that counseling interventions contribute significantly to treatment and sustained sobriety. When used in conjunction with MAT, clients not only receive needed medical support, they also learn how to manage their addiction well after the cessation of MAT. For example, in relapse prevention training, clients learn how to recognize triggers and employ strategies that will keep them from relapse. They address social relationships and activities that may be contributing to their addiction, and vice versa. In counseling, clients are also encouraged to identify life values that can give them hope for a meaningful and satisfying future. These are vital elements in the recovery process.

People with mental illness have long been stigmatized in our society. This is even more true for those suffering with addiction. This stigma is plainly evident in the different standards of insurance reimbursement provided to people with mental illness. We ask "why should mental illness be treated differently than any other illness?". MAT and counseling could help address the extraordinary costs of human suffering, hardship on families and communities, and burden to our medical and social services system. These interventions are an investment in the future, as they would help prevent the costlier interventions after addiction emerges.

It is also critically important that proper substance abuse services and detox services are offered and made available. However currently, third party payors are not mandated to reimburse detox and substance abuse services. H.B. 5256 An Act Concerning Required Health Insurance Coverage for Detoxification and Substance Abuse Services would eliminate this barrier, thereby enabling people to seek the help they so desperately need.

The CCA urges the Insurance Committee to vote in favor of HB 5254 and HB 5256. There is ample evidence that both MAT, detoxification and counseling services, especially when used in conjunction, results in less addiction and more safety and health in the community. Therefore,

third party payers should be required to provide reimbursement that is on par with other forms of illness.