



CONNECTICUT  
LEGAL  
RIGHTS  
PROJECT, INC.

TESTIMONY OF KATHLEEN FLAHERTY, ESQ.  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.  
INSURANCE AND REAL ESTATE COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING  
FEBRUARY 27, 2020

**In support of HB 5248**, ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR PEER SUPPORT SERVICES IN THIS STATE; **HB 5254**, AN ACT REQUIRING HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR MEDICATION-ASSISTED TREATMENT FOR OPIOID USE DISORDER; **HB 5256**, AN ACT CONCERNING REQUIRED HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR DETOXIFICATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES; and **HB 5247**, AN ACT CONCERNING EXPLANATIONS OF BENEFITS.

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Senator Lesser, Representative Scanlon, Senator Kelly, Representative Pavalock-D'Amato and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Kathy Flaherty and I'm the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), a statewide non-profit agency that provides legal services to low income adults with serious mental health conditions. CLRP was established in 1990 pursuant to a Consent Order which mandated that the state provide funding for CLRP to protect the civil rights of DMHAS clients who are hospitalized, as well as those clients who are living in the community. I'm also the Co-Chair of the Keep the Promise Coalition (KTP). KTP is a coalition of advocates (people living with mental health conditions, family members, mental health professionals and interested community members) with a vision of a state in which people with mental health conditions are able to live successfully in the community because they have access to housing and other community-based supports and services that are recovery oriented, person-driven and holistic in their approach to wellness. Lastly, I'm a member of the steering committee of the

Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, an alliance of people of all ages with all disabilities who pursue a unified agenda.

I encourage the committee to **support HB 5248** and establish a task force to study health insurance coverage for peer support services in this state. Peer-delivered services promote recovery. I would suggest that the task force also examine coverage for peer support services under Medicaid. It is very important that the Task Force include people from the various organizations who have been involved in training peer providers of support services, including recovery support specialists and recovery coaches, so my suggestion would be that the committee consider amending the bill to name specific organizations to be included at the table.

Last year, this legislature passed, on a bipartisan basis, legislation aimed at ensuring health insurers treat mental health conditions the same way any other health conditions are treated. That mental health parity law is now effective. What some might call mandates of **HB 5254 and HB 5256** simply ensure that insurers subject to regulation by the State of Connecticut cover these behavioral health services. **I urge the committee to demonstrate its support for mental health parity by moving these bills forward.**

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Some people are deterred from seeking treatment because they are afraid of disclosure to others – sometimes even members of their own family. Although we may hope that all families are loving, caring, and free from abuse, that simply is not true. The additional privacy that would be afforded to a recipient of health care, by protecting the confidentiality of explanation of benefits for services rendered, would mean that people would not be afraid to access the health care they need. A young adult covered by their parents' health insurance may not want their parents to know that they have accessed mental health care; despite all our efforts at eradicating stigma, that fear of exposure is real. This raised bill would ensure that young adult could get the care they want and need. I urge the committee to **support HB 5247.**

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.