

Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 27, 2020

Testimony in Support of:

H.B. No. 5248, H.B. No. 5254, An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Health Insurance Coverage for Peer Support Services In This State.

H.B. No. 5254, An Act Requiring Health Insurance Coverage For Medication-Assisted Treatment For Opioid Use Disorder

H.B. No. 5256 An Act Concerning Required Health Insurance Coverage For Detoxification And Substance Abuse Services

Co-Chairs Scanlon and Lesser; Vice Chairs Dathan and Hartley; Ranking Member Pavalock-D'Amato and Kelly; and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee:

My name is Rebecca Miller.

My sister has been an addict for over 10 years. I watched my best friend, the person who taught me to drive, morph so drastically into another person. What started her addiction exactly, I'm not sure, possibly a combination of things like trauma and back surgery. However, she went from opiates/pain pills to falling headfirst into hell with a needle in her arm, taking my family down with her. I watched my parent lose everything. I watched my own money, clothes, electronics, go missing. I watched my parents get sick. I tried so desperately to save them and inevitably sank myself. I watched my father sob for the first time in my life in a hospital waiting room as he apologized to me for being unable to save her. My sister lost custody of two children to DCF due to inability to maintain sobriety. The second child was taken from her in February 2016 and eventually placed with me April 22 2016 (and he is now legally my son). I changed my entire life at 23 years old to try to take this little boy. He was born addicted to methadone and endured neglect, and we deal with the aftermath of that everyday. November 29, 2016 my parents home had a fire and my mother didn't survive. My sisters addiction took an even uglier turn. She would try to guilt my father into giving her money, she even asked me for money a few times. Months would go by where my father and I really didn't know whether she was alive or not. One day someone sent me a news article at work, a prostitution sting in Waterbury, something like 18 girls arrested. My sisters mugshot knocked the wind out of me. I didn't recognize her. She was using meth and crack now, she looked emaciated, with sores on her face. I cried right there at work. And the entire drive home. I cried because my sister was a beautiful brilliant girl. And she was suffering; living in a way I couldn't even imagine. My family doesn't have money. The little money my parents had my sister took. They would have given anything to be able to help her, to be able to send her to the best rehabs out there, but they couldn't. I saw and endured things I never should have growing up with an addicted sibling. My life is vastly different than most. I have PTSD from the years I spent watching my sisters addiction destroy my family, and the things I saw. My sister is currently in prison and has been there for a few months. I watch people shame and talk badly about addicts, and the thing is, I don't blame them. If you were to meet my sister in the height of her addiction you would tell me she's a liar and con artist, a master manipulator, a prostitute with no future, homeless, etc.. I would agree, except that is not my sister, that is who

she is when she's addicted. That is the change the addiction and drugs made to her brain. Because my sister, the real her, is smart, funny, and a hard worker. She's an incredible poet, and drives better than a lot of guys. My sister is not the person so many people have met. She's the person I knew. And I miss her everyday.

I am urging you to consider these bills to ensure insurance companies are required to provide help to those seeking services and to utilize MAT as a standard form of treatment, the data suggests this is one of the most successful ways to help those recovering from addiction.