

Testimony in Support of HB 6095
Insurance and Real Estate Committee
February 24, 2020

Senators Lesser and Kelly, Representatives Scanlon and Pavalock-D'Amato, and Members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee,

High Watch Recovery Center appreciates the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of HB 5256: AN ACT CONCERNING REQUIRED HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR DETOXIFICATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES.

My name is Jerry Schwab and I am the President and CEO of High Watch Recovery Center. High Watch is a 78 bed residential addiction recovery center located in Kent, CT. Founded in 1939, we are the first substance abuse community in the world founded on the 12 Step principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. Through these teachings and treatments, we offer patients the tools and foundation to live sober after leaving High Watch.

Addiction is a chronic disease like any other and the treatment of individuals struggling with addiction requires a long-term approach. Clinicians, social workers and physicians with backgrounds in addiction medicine must spend time with a patient over the course of months. This is necessary for treatment to be effective and to prevent relapse.

Recovery is a true continuum of care. Individuals start in detox, if needed, then progress to inpatient residential care, partial hospitalization care, and then outpatient care. Insurers cover this continuum haphazardly and inconsistently. Patients need access to the full continuum and this bill assures access to it.

At High Watch, we follow up with our guests after they have discharged at six different intervals. At each of these intervals, those guests who stay with us longer have improved rates of recovery. **At both one month and one year after discharge, those who have been with us fewer than thirty days relapse at twice the rate of those who have been with us for thirty days or longer.**

Not only does this save more lives, but it lowers the long-term cost of recovery as fewer relapses lead to fewer readmissions.

In addition to addressing minimum lengths of stay and treatment sessions, **we deeply appreciate that the bill addresses the issue of Medical necessity.** This is of tremendous benefit to individuals in recovery. Medical necessity currently determined by the insurer largely in a vacuum. While some insurers provide excellent coverage and are fair and reasonable in determining medical necessity, there are too many insurers that either provide too few days of coverage or who deny medical necessity at an excessive and alarming rate using unrealistic criteria.

We urge the Committee to support HB 5256 because we believe that individuals struggling through alcoholism and substance use disorders should be given the best chance at recovery without relapse. Extended residential and outpatient care represent that chance for success.