

Representative Dathan,

I wanted to reach out to you today to talk about the upcoming vote on HB 5270, An Act Concerning Peer Support Specialists and Requiring Health Insurance Coverage for Outpatient Peer Support Services Provided By Certified Peer Support Specialists. I strongly support the passing of this legislation and feel it will enhance the services available to those in the mental health and addiction treatment system.

Peer support is one of the most effective ways to break through the walls of stigma and show a person in crisis that recovery is possible; no other treatment team member can do what peers do. Organizations like the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) agree that Peer Support has been proven to impact a person's recovery in positive ways. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) uses a peer support structure and has been widely successful since 1935.

Peers have also proven their value right here in Connecticut. Advocacy Unlimited is a Peer driven and respected resource, one that the state values enough to have awarded a \$5,954,460 contract. Other Peer driven groups, such as ours, Recovery Innovations for Pursuing Peer Leadership and Empowerment (RIPPLE), is entirely funded out of pocket and run by passionate volunteers. RockingRecovery.org, Ripple's online resource, is being used by several service providers in the state to connect their clients to additional programs to improve their quality of life.

We need to make a change, and I believe adding peers to the workforce is a step in the right direction. Evidence has already proven we can be effective; all we are asking is that we are allowed to prove that and so much more.

Thank you for your time,

Jeffrey Santo
Norwalk, CT