



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Opposing Senate Bill 967, An Act
Concerning the Recommendations of the Department of Mental
Health and Addiction Services Regarding Emergency Medication**

Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is David McGuire, and I am executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 967, An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Regarding Emergency Medication. The ACLU-CT opposes this proposal because it would severely curtail the privacy rights and liberty interests of people with serious mental health conditions.

Our Constitution protects the liberty and privacy rights of all people, including people with serious mental health conditions. In addition, people have a civil liberty right to make their own health care decisions. Senate Bill 967, however, infringes on patients' liberty and privacy rights by expanding who can medicate a patient without his or her consent. Under our state's current law, the decision to forcibly medicate someone is made by the "head of the hospital," with consultation from other medical experts. Limiting the process by which an individual may be forcibly medicated provides protections for people with psychiatric disabilities.

This bill, however, would allow a physician or a senior clinician to make the decision to forcibly medicate someone. As a result, this proposal would take Connecticut down a slippery slope of creating more pockets of impunity with regard to patients' privacy, liberty, and bodily autonomy.

Health experts have found that involuntary treatment can prevent mental health recovery, not promote it, and evidence from other states has shown that involuntary mental health treatment is disproportionately used against minorities. In New York, for instance, Black patients were five times more likely to receive forcible mental health treatment orders than their white peers.

Connecticut has more pressing needs surrounding mental health care, and Connecticut residents deserve greater protections for their privacy and liberty rights. We urge this committee to oppose Senate Bill 967.