



Legislative Testimony
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Written Testimony Supporting House Bill 6398, An Act Concerning Various Revisions to Statutes Concerning the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Senator Daugherty Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Ranking Members Hwang, Somers, and Petit, and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Kelly McConney Moore, and I am the interim senior policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am submitting this testimony in support of House Bill 6398, An Act Concerning Various Revisions to Statutes Concerning the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

The ACLU-CT believes that people receiving treatment in psychiatric facilities, no matter the security level of those facilities, are entitled to dignity and to their Constitutionally protected rights. For too long, patients in Connecticut have been denied dignity. House Bill 6398 represents a small, but real, step forward on that front.

We strongly support Section 2 of this bill, which requires that the advisory board for Whiting Forensic Hospital must now include two people with psychiatric disabilities, including at least one person directly impacted by inpatient psychiatric healthcare. Marginalized people with lived experience are experts in both the effects of policies and the solutions to harmful policies. They belong in all places where decisions are being made that will affect their communities. Adding directly impacted people to the Whiting Forensic Hospital advisory board is necessary, but not sufficient, to correcting the harms that have occurred there.

Because of both those past harms and the rights to which people receiving inpatient care at psychiatric facilities are entitled, we support the amendment to Section 1 of

this bill proposed by the Connecticut Legal Rights Project in the testimony of its Executive Director, Kathleen Flaherty.¹ CLRP proposes that, with respect to searches of patient belongings and rooms, Whiting Forensic Hospital Patients should not be treated differently than patients at other facilities. Because of that, removing the existing exception carved out for patients at Whiting Forensic Hospital is a better solution than the proposed new language of Section 1. We support this amendment and encourage the Committee to make those changes to House Bill 6398. With that change, we encourage the Committee to support House Bill 6398.

¹ Connecticut House Bill 6398 (2021), testimony by Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc., *available at* <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2021/PHdata/Tmy/2021HB-06398-R000303-Flaherty,%20Kathleen,%20Executive%20Director-CT%20Legal%20Rights%20Project,%20Inc.-TMY.PDF>.