



CONNECTICUT  
LEGAL  
RIGHTS  
PROJECT, INC.

STATEMENT FROM KATHY FLAHERTY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IN THE WAKE OF PASSAGE OF SB 450, AN ACT CONCERNING CONNECTICUT  
VALLEY AND WHITING FORENSIC HOSPITALS

Today was a day for which our clients residing in Whiting Forensic Hospital have been waiting for more than five years. It was in the spring of 2017 that a whistleblower drew attention to ongoing patient abuse. Ten Whiting employees were criminally charged for their abusive actions; close to 40 were terminated, voluntarily quit or allowed to retire. In 2018, the legislature passed a bill creating a task force to look at CVH and Whiting and gave them a specific charge to examine a number of issues. The task force started meeting in 2019 and issued their final report in December 2021.

Today marked passage of a bill implementing some of their recommendations. However, as Representative Steinberg said when he brought out the bill in the House, “This is not the end of the story. It’s the beginning of a process.”

[Senate Bill 450, as amended by Senate Schedule A, LCO #5549](#) represents the bill that could pass in the limited time available in a short legislative session. The amendment removed language in the original bill in order to address concerns raised by victims and their advocates at the public hearing.

The public hearing for this bill represented a remarkable achievement. The use of technology meant that residents of Whiting Forensic Hospital could testify at a public hearing on a bill that would directly affect their lives. Nearly 30 residents of the hospital testified during the hearing, thanks to efforts of legislative committee staff and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. CLRP is grateful to all who contributed to supporting so many people to participate in the political process.

CLRP thanks the members of the CVH-Whiting Task Force for their thoughtful report. We also thank all the members of the Connecticut legislature who voted for this bill despite getting pressure from very vocal constituencies who opposed it. Thank you for recognizing that this bill is about the lives of patients in DMHAS inpatient psychiatric facilities and the state employees who provide services in those hospitals. Thank you for centering them in your consideration of this bill. All of you present voted in favor of this bill. On behalf of our clients, thank you.

CLRP hopes that Governor Lamont will promptly sign this bill into law, and looks forward to continuing to advocate zealously for our clients as this reform process moves forward.