



Central Naugatuck Valley
HELP, Inc.

900 Watertown Avenue, Waterbury, CT 06708 Phone/Fax 203-756-8984

**Roberta Murtagh, Executive Director
Central Naugatuck Valley Help, Inc.
900 Watertown Avenue, Waterbury, CT 06708**

Testimony to the Human Services Committee for 3/13/07

Support for Bills:

**#1396: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE PURCHASE OF SERVICE CONTRACTS
FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**#1338: AN ACT CONCERNING A COST OF LIVING INCREASE FOR PRIVATE
PROVIDERS OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE**

Good afternoon honored members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Roberta Murtagh, and I am the Executive Director of Central Naugatuck Valley Help, Inc. At Help, Inc. we contract with the State of Connecticut to provide addiction and mental health treatment to over 380 individuals and their families annually. The vast majority of these individuals are among the poorest citizens of our state.

I'm here today to support **Bill Number 1396, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE PURCHASE OF SERVICE CONTRACTS FOR HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICE.**

This bill would allow the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management to waive the competitive procurement requirements contracts with providers of human services. This bill is incredibly important to our agency and the people we serve. We provide people in need with HOMES. To uproot these vulnerable people who have come to trust their providers and recover from their mental health issues would be irresponsible and detrimental. The procurement of human services are not the same as the procurement of other services; "people are not pot holes". In addition, the instability that the re-bidding process would have on our already stressed and fragile mental health system could be devastating for providers and consumers alike.

I also support Bill Number 1338, AN ACT CONCERNING A COST OF LIVING INCREASE FOR PRIVATE PROVIDERS OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

As you know, the Governor's budget offers no relief to private, non profit providers. We are struggling at Help, Inc., as many agencies are, to continue to provide desperately needed services to our clients.



Central Naugatuck Valley

HELP, Inc.

900 Watertown Avenue, Waterbury, CT 06708 Phone/Fax 203-756-8984

At our agency we have had tremendous difficulty with recruiting and retaining staff members for our programs. The committed, qualified professionals in our programs are leaving the private sector and sometimes the field altogether in order to support themselves and their families. At

our agency we have had about a 25% turnover in staff during this past year. Considering how low their salaries are to begin with and the fact that their wages have only increased 7% over the past 7 years, it's not surprising. The impact that this turnover and staff shortage have on the quality of care is inevitable. Our clients and our staff deserve better.

No increase in funding or COLAs means that we lose money, as we **cannot** prevent our bills from increasing. For example, just since 2002:

- our utility costs have increased 56%,
- our organization's insurance (property/casualty/liability) has increased 95%,
- and our food costs have risen by 32%, just to name a few of our expenses.

I also urge you to include the **Dept. of Correction and the Childrens' Trust Fund** to this bill. Over 40% of our funding comes from the DOC. Another \$80,000 is federal funding through DMHAS, which historically have not been included in the COLAs. We must have an increase across the board.

Please support these bills and the mental health and substance abuse treatment providers and consumers of our state. I respectfully ask that you ensure that we are not forgotten, and that you support the important work that we do. We are depending upon you to enable us to continue to provide these essential services.

Thank you.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.