



Central Naugatuck Valley

HELP, Inc.

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Testimony to the Human Services Committee for 2/27/07

Support for Bill # 5640: AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASED ACCESS TO THE MEDICAID PROGRAM FOR THE MEDICALLY NEEDY

My name is Roberta Murtagh, and I am the Executive Director of Central Naugatuck Valley Help Inc., and a member of the CT Association of Nonprofits. At Help, Inc we provide mental health and substance abuse treatment to men and women in Waterbury, Litchfield and Torrington. We serve approximately 380 individuals and their families annually. Our mission is to integrate people in recovery into their communities and improve the quality of their lives. We focus on residential and non-residential therapy, support and skill development. The people we serve are some of the poorest citizens in the state.

The Governor's Budget contains insufficient funds for moving forward with the next phase of the Medicaid Rehab Option (MRO.) A successful adult mental health treatment system under the MRO is not possible without the support of two key budget priorities:

- 1) Enact Community Investment and Fair Rate Methodologies for the Medicaid Rehabilitation Option**
- 2) Enact Changes in the Medicaid Spend Down Threshold**

Bill Number 5640, AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASED ACCESS TO THE MEDICAID PROGRAM FOR THE MEDICALLY NEEDY accomplishes the second goal by doing the following:

- Raises the income limit (between \$476 and \$575/month, region dependent) for Medicaid recipients for the first time since 1990.
- Reduces the number of vulnerable individuals with limited resources that must incur enough medical bills in a 6 month period to "spend down" to qualify for Medicaid.
- Pays providers, who frequently are not paid while individuals spend down, more quickly and reduces their financial risk.

Please support this bill and the mental health treatment providers and consumers of our state. Too many promises have been broken already. Any changes to the system must be made with the proper resources and planning. We are counting on you to make sure that this happens. Your efforts on this matter are greatly appreciated. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have.