

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
February 18, 2009
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I would like to share with all of you my happy and my sad story of why it is so important not to cut funding for mental health treatment and medications in this state.

In Branford we are so fortunate to have a wonderful mental health facility, Harbor Health, which my family has used for many years.

When my son was diagnosis with Paranoid Schizophrenia more that fifteen years ago I had nowhere to turn.

After many hospitalizations and crises, I called the state of Connecticut and somehow found that Harbor Health had an outpatient service that may be of help to my family. I began attending NAMI meetings which are held in their building and found the many resources that were available to my son right here in Branford, such as Case Management, social workers, psychiatrists and also a social club. Having a child with a severe mental illness is a lifelong road. After many years of denial and frustration I have come to the next step and that is acceptance and hope.

To watch a handsome, talented and extremely bright young man who was in college and seemed to have a future, suddenly become a different person who heard voices and began to act in a bizarre way was painful and shocking.

After many years of hospital stays and medications my son is finally stable. With the help of Harbor Health and the Shoreline visiting nurses who see my son and administer his medication daily, he is able to live independently in a small apartment in Branford through the Branford Housing Authority. Housing is a huge issue for people with mental illness. Harbor Health does own several small apartment buildings in town and provide housing to many clients, but there is a waiting list. My son is on SSI and Medicare and thankfully his medication is provided, but when his spend down happens twice a year, we worry that he may have to go several days without his medication. This can cause serious problems. Also his food stamp allotment has decreased, and he only gets a little over \$100.00 a month. His rent is \$200, and he has to pay heat, electric, and telephone, etc. I usually need to supplement his food, so he can get through the month. Since he has never worked his SSI is a little over \$800 a month. The reason I bring up the money he receives and spends, is so you can see that helping to keep him independent and living in a small apartment is much more cost effective than if the state had to provide a hospital or rest home and twenty four hour care.

I take him to his appointment, shopping, etc., so he can live with a little dignity.

Thank you