

IN THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

DMHAS Agency: Budget Public Hearing

Friday, February 20th, 2009

Testimony of Ms. Jennifer Bucci

USMC – Veteran, Advocacy Unlimited, Inc. Employee (part-time), CVH Survivor

Po Box 636, Torrington, Connecticut 06790

Good Day, Madam Chair and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jennifer Bucci. I am an honorably discharged veteran of the United States Marine Corps, with seven years of service (1987-1994). I have an Associate's Degree in Human Services. Currently, I work part-time for Advocacy Unlimited, Inc. as a Community Advocate Educator in Torrington. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony regarding the DMHAS' agency budget.

The following statement, details my **support** for the proposed funding for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). As a person in recovery and a taxpayer, it is vital to address my personal experiences with DMHAS.

From 2001 to 2007, I was in-patient at Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH) in Middletown. As the state's only public psychiatric hospital, I spent six long years there. This is significant, because at the cost of over \$1000.00 a day. The State of Connecticut should ensure timely discharges and reentry into the community.

I personally advocated for my discharge from CVH and became a productive member of the community again. Since January 2008, I am in my junior year at Saint Joseph College; working towards a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work. The mental health services in the community are far more beneficial and successful than an inpatient setting.

DMHAS must be sustained to ensure appropriate funding for the system of care that results in cost effective, efficient, and community based treatment. Community services for individuals who are safe to be discharged from psychiatric hospitals must be a priority. As well as, support for veterans and other individuals who may benefit from mental health or addiction services. DMHAS funded community services, such as Prime Time Club House and Northwest Mental Health Network in Torrington offer outstanding supports and links within the community.

As an Advocate and CVH survivor, I personally cost the taxpayers over \$ 2,500,000 million dollars. The part of the DMHAS investment that was successful, was the community based services, not my "incarceration at CVH". People do recover. However, the services have to be appropriated correctly to avoid enduring and repeated trauma, abuse, restraints, isolation,

investigations, and costs that hospital settings procure. Wouldn't it be better to have taxpaying citizens in recovery, then people constantly revolving in and out of hospitals? DMHAS is worth the investment and the citizens of Connecticut will be better off because of it!

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.