NAMI

National Alliance on Mental Illness

Testimony before the Housing Committee
February 19, 2009
Support for HB 5071

Good morning, Senator Gomes, Representative Green, and members of the Housing Committee. My name is Alicia Woodsby, and I am the Public Policy Director for the National Alliance on Mental Illness, CT (NAMI-CT). I am here to testify today in support of HB 5071, An Act Concerning the Supportive Housing Initiative. This bill calls for additional funds for supportive housing.

Study after study, in this state and nationally, reflect disturbing and stark trends of the deficits in housing and services, resulting in homelessness, unnecessary nursing home admissions, and at worst, imprisonment. All of which translate into higher costs to the state.

Supportive housing is permanent, independent and affordable housing combined with on-site or visiting case management, support and employment services. Persons with psychiatric disabilities have few options for finding safe, affordable, and permanent housing within the community. With a place to live and the right treatment and medications, people with serious mental illnesses are able to engage in recovery and lead happy and fulfilling lives. Supportive housing provides the stability that is missing for many individuals with mental illnesses.

Two years ago the State appropriated funding and made the commitment to develop 150 units of supportive housing. The Governor has backed away from this commitment by halting the funding. Without sources of capital financing for the creation of affordable and supportive housing, there will be no new affordable or supportive housing created. Connecticut desperately needs these units, without them the state will lose money by having to pay for costly institutionalizations and emergency care.

Furthermore, the state will lose the momentum that it has gained, if the demand and capacity for supportive housing continue to exceed available funding levels. The cost of supportive housing is $54 per person per day. In comparison, it is $183 per person per day for prison, $218 for nursing homes, and $1,187 for inpatient psychiatric care. The state cannot afford to lose more ground. Especially when studies show that supportive housing saves Medicaid dollars, promotes education and employment, and benefits communities by increasing property values and successfully supporting people in recovery.

Please consider this while deciding on this legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to address this important issue, and to express our support of this bill.

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