

Testimony for Public Hearing
Appropriations Committee
March 20, 2009

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S.B. No. 246 (Committee) An Act Concerning a Commission on Federal Stimulus Distribution

Good Afternoon Appropriations Committee Members. My name is Selina Welborn and I am an Advocacy Unlimited (AU) advocate and educator. I am also the founder and chapter leader of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Greater Hartford (DBSA). Advocacy Unlimited is a statewide advocacy organization that offers education in self, systems and legislative advocacy skills for persons with, or in recovery from, psychiatric disabilities or co-occurring disorders. Since 1995, 371 advocates have graduated from 36 graduations across the state of Connecticut in our program.

AU and DBSA Greater Hartford represent hundreds of Connecticut residents in recovery from psychiatric disabilities who have been impacted by the economic downturn and who rely on psychiatric medications to support them in their recovery from severe mental illnesses. I am here today to ask you to reject the cuts to prescription coverage proposed by the Governor's budget. I am here today to ask you not to let Connecticut's older adults and people with disabilities be hurt by the same proposed cuts.

- Continue to cover drugs not on Medicare Part D formularies that *are* covered by ConnPACE & Medicaid.
- Continue to cover Part D co-pays for dually eligible Medicaid & Medicare participants; who are very low income older adults and people with disabilities.
- Safeguard ConnPACE-do not unduly restrict access or limit the enrollment period.
- Do not impose new prior authorization requirements for Medicaid-covered drugs.

I am here to ask you to ensure that CT's lower income older adults and people with disabilities are not hurt by the Governor's proposal to cut the Part D Wrap Around and ConnPACE!

While I am speaking as an advocate for all those I know and have spoken to who will be detrimentally affected by the Governor's proposal to cut the Part D Wrap Around and ConnPACE, I also have personal experience with both ConnPACE and Medicare Part D. You see, I am one of the more fortunate individuals in CT because I have full-time employment. However, I was just hired. From December 20, 2008 until January 14 of this year I was between employments. If it were not for samples of cholesterol medication I received from my endocrinologist and samples of my psych med I received from my counseling center, I would have gone without medication. Each medication was hundreds of dollars, my psych med over \$300 even with Medicare Part D. Needless to say, jobless, I could not afford the medication necessary for my own recovery. Before December 20, I worked as a VISTA Member for three years so I had a health benefit from the Corporation of National and Community Service. My prescriptions during that period were free. As I said, I am one of the more fortunate in my recovery community. Because of my social security disability and living allowance, I wasn't eligible for ConnPACE, but Thank God, I didn't have to use Medicare Part D. In fact, I haven't used my Medicare Part D because I couldn't afford the premiums or the co-pays after rent, utilities, transportation and other necessities. Today, I have private insurance and a job, so the co-pays are manageable, but I still have not been able to get one of my necessary cholesterol medications because I am awaiting prior authorization. Since the samples ran out, I've had to go without this medication for weeks.

I tell you my story, not to win your sympathy, but rather your vote to ensure that those less fortunate than me, the very lower income older adults, people with disabilities, and those somewhere in between, will not have to choose between rent and utilities, food, and transportation and medicines, especially the more expensive psych meds.

Thank you for your time and consideration.