



SOUTH PARK INN, INC.

Programs for Homeless Men, Women and Children
Emergency Shelter • Transitional Living • Plimpton House

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing

February 18, 2009

My name is Brian Baker I am the Assistant Director of the South Park Inn shelter. I am here speaking on behalf of the South Park Inn a member of the Connecticut Association of Non-Profits. I would first want to thank the members of the Appropriations Committee for hearing my testimony tonight. As you well know the shelters are an essential service for people to turn to at a time they are in their most need. Our homeless veterans find refuge in our veteran drop-in-center, our families, singles those just released from prison and hospitals also find refuge with us. For twenty five years our staff have been proud to serve thousands of citizens of our state in just this way. In fact the many hundreds of volunteers from our area churches, synagogues, civic and business groups and yes even volunteers from the legislative body also believe in the work we do as an essential service. Our doctors, dentists, nurses, counselors and other volunteers also help those we serve find their way out of homelessness.

I want to thank the Governors budget for sparing the DSS supported homeless shelters any cuts to their budgets. For many years the DSS supported agencies have had little to no cost of living increase and have been flat funded so our employees have already been denied benefits they were getting in past years. The shelters have been instrumental in getting people off the streets and back on their feet. We are proud of our successes and have many former clients returned to volunteer and run our AA and NA meetings and give back to the community. Without the shelters more people would be on the streets. Any cut in our services would be insufferable. Shelters can not go up on the rent when the cost of food, fuel and utilities go up in trying to house an ever expanding homeless population. The demand for our services has never been higher and we are unfortunately busier than ever. The South Park Inn remained full last year and on many nights' slept people in its lobby. Scarcely one mile from here, the South Park Inn turned away over 2000 people last year.

Please do not balance the budget on cuts to human services. Broad cuts to our social service nets would surely make us pay for them in other ways. Without long-term solutions like affordable housing, subsidies and supportive housing homelessness will not end in our time. Giving people hope is what DSS supported non-profits do every day and we fear a domino effect if we cut unwisely and at the expense of the neediest among us.