

Good Afternoon. My name is Matthew Rowe. I am testifying today to ask that you NOT make cuts to any funding for the DMHAS Budget.

My first indications of mental illness took place in ninth grade. I was in creative writing class and the teacher became concerned because all my poetry consisted of a deep loneliness and many more alarming stories of suicide. I was tested by the school psychologist, but before any treatment could start I dropped out of school. I started working at 16 but found it difficult to maintain employment.

By the age of 21, I was self-medicating with alcohol. I knew from the beginning that alcohol only masked the dark secrets of my mind. It was then that my journey began. I hitch hiked to Berkley California. I lived on the streets and while I was there I was told of a monastery that worked that worked with troubled teens. It was approximately four hours North of San Francisco. It was in this serene heaven that loneliness and depression overtook me. After a nine-month stay there I traveled the revolving railroad of sporadic employment and more frequent homelessness.

At age 25, I found help for the first time. It was then that I learned I was not alone. In the next 10 years, I would be hospitalized at least six times for suicidal tendencies. I attribute this to a few different causes. One was the constant changing of the preferred drug list, which leaves my doctors to try new medicines resulting in more ER trips. Secondly, that I suffer from an illness, which tells me that I am not sick.

One of the most important aspects of my recovery is the Independence Center. It is a social club for people with mental illness. In this altruistic setting have found the compassion and support and friendship I craved. The Dalai Lamas once said, "The purpose of our lives is happiness." I could not achieve any measure of happiness without the help of medicine, doctors and most important the friends I have met in recovery.

If you asked me a month ago when my depression began, I would have said ninth grade, but now I know it began in my youth. I spend most of my earlier years in Newington Children Hospital. It was there that I first felt alone and under the disguise of shyness laid a mind fluttering with fear and a deep seed of pain. It was the silent scream of those who felt they have no voice. Thank you for your time.