

Testimony for Public Hearing
Appropriations Committee
February 20, 2009

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H.B. 6365 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2011, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS
THEREFOR

Good evening members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Selina Welborn and I am an Advocacy Unlimited advocate, founder and chapter leader of the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance of Greater Hartford. Four years ago I sat before you in support of Wrap around services for Medicare Part D. A few months after that I was hired as a VISTA Member and from 2005-2008 I served AU as a VISTA member so I could not testify on matters of concern to me as a person in recovery from a psychiatric disability. In January of this year, I began working full time as an advocate and educator for Advocacy Unlimited and currently there are no such restrictions. So it is with great pleasure and pride that I speak with you today to share some of my reflections over the past four years concerning the need for DMHAS services and especially supportive housing.

Coincidentally, the past four years coincide with what I consider to be my recovery from a very serious mental illness even though I have lived with it for more than eleven years. In 1998, I was first diagnosed with bipolar disorder and was fortunate enough to have a full time job and private insurance from 1998-2003 and so could choose from a list of private doctors and therapists. By 2003, my illness had taken its toll on me and I found myself in a position of being unable to work any longer. Unlike many I applied for social security disability and was granted it with the first application. After many hospitalizations, a change in diagnoses and a move back to Connecticut, I found myself a recipient of services at a DMHAS funded counseling agency in Enfield, CT. The partial hospital, psychiatric services and adult outpatient therapy proved therapeutically effective and played a significant role in my resultant recovery. Today, I continue to utilize both

medication management and adult outpatient therapy along with the aforementioned support group and work as part of my daily, weekly and bimonthly recovery regimen. So I ask you to please consider my story and there are many other people like me whose lives have been saved or greatly improved by the services they receive from DMHAS funded agencies and more importantly treatment providers.

I appreciate the difficult task you are faced with over the upcoming weeks concerning the budget, and I am here today to also ask you to remember the people who sat before you and me, because I was still an audience member over the past four years and especially two years ago when advocates around the state asked you to fund safe and affordable housing. Like others have already said and I will repeat, the Governor committed to fund 150 units of Supportive Housing. We ask you to hold her to that commitment. I know I don't need to tell those of you who are our supporters, how important it is to people who are veterans, families with children and people with disabilities who are homeless. You know, you know. We simply ask that you remember that when making the tough choices you must make over the upcoming weeks. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.