

## **Appropriations Subcommittee Hearing 2-11-2010**

### Testimony for Funding AIDS / HIV and Supportive Housing Programs

Dear Appropriations Chairs and Committee Members:

My name is Jody Wynn Rodiger and I would like to first thank the Appropriations Committee for the good work that you have done to help people in need thru the years.

I currently serve on the Ryan White Planning Council, Manchester Initiative for Supportive Housing and have recently completed the Keep the Promise Advocacy Program to move forward to work on more creative ways to serve people who suffer from HIV/AIDS, mental disorders and addictions that are the root of chronic homelessness. In the past 20 years I have volunteered and served on several boards that serve the HIV/AIDS community, developmental disabilities, homelessness and both affordable and supportive housing initiatives. We are living in difficult times that have been very stressful on so many good people of our communities. That is why I am here this evening to stress the need for the dollars to support the good work of supportive housing that will not only help so many people that are already underserved and at risk but will save the state money.

The Reaching Home Campaign's key message is: Do Not Cut Housing/Homelessness Services. The Truth of our society at this time is that 100,000 of the 400,000 renting households in CT earn less than 50% AMI and spend more than half of that income on housing, leaving virtually nothing for necessities, other needs. Even though local public housing authorities administer federal Housing Choice (formerly known as Section 8) vouchers, all of these programs are over subscribed. In mid-2007, nearly 50,000 households applied for only 1,000 rent subsidies after DSS opened its waiting list to make new Section 8 vouchers and RAP certificates available. Journey Home has documented that on average every single unit of supportive housing nationwide has saved over half the average expenditures of chronic homelessness visits to shelters, emergency rooms and mental health services.

While several years ago the HIV/AIDS disease was reclassified to be a chronic disease, in my personal experience serving the HIV/AIDS world, the truth is that the stigmatism still exists and people living with HIV/AIDS have been on a roller coaster ride of funding cuts and changes that have hurt their overall well being. People living with HIV/AIDS suffer many additional barriers that other people living with other chronic diseases do not suffer such as good health care and housing opportunities to live in a good community with support. Last year I personally lost the most friends and fellow advocates that I have experienced since the mid 1980's. Enough is enough we need to support good work that serves the people of our community.

We need a balanced approach that addresses the state's structural revenue problem with a revenue solution. Specifically, we urge you to support the revenue options proposed by the Better Choices for Connecticut coalition, including closing corporate tax loopholes, evaluating corporate tax breaks to see whether CT is actually getting an economic return on its investment, delaying reductions in the estate tax, and increasing income taxes on households most able to pay. My mantra is Health, Housing and Happiness for All ! I ask you isn't that what our countries foundation is based on - with liberty and justice for all. Our society still has a long way to go to get back to the basics and service all people as promised. Thank you for your time.

Jody Wynn Rodiger - Urban Planning and Environmental Design Professional