

**Testimony**  
**Diane L. Manning, President/CEO**  
**United Services, Inc.**  
**to the**  
**Appropriations Committee**  
**February 18, 2010**

Good evening. My name is Diane Manning. I serve as the President and CEO of United Services, which is the comprehensive behavioral health center for all ages, domestic violence and child abuse prevention provider, and Local Mental Health Authority for the residents of Connecticut's "Quiet Corner".

These days the Quiet Corner of Connecticut isn't so quiet. In the last two years intakes for United Services' Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Abuse treatment are up by 86%, and the volume of families served in our Child Guidance Clinic has increased by 25%. Emergency visits are up by more than 50%. Domestic Violence incidences are also up, and the needs of each of the people who come to us for services are increasingly complex.

You have heard from me on numerous occasions on behalf of United Services, as well as the other providers of vital human services. On those occasions I, like many others, have gone into great detail about what state policies have done to non-profits like United Services and the children, families and individuals we serve. I've provided facts and figures which illustrate that even as the cost of living increases, and expenses for health insurance, heating fuel, food and gas increase, state policies represent defacto cuts.

I can provide those facts again but today I want to be more blunt and to the point. Non-profit providers give the taxpayers the most bang for their buck, and thanks to government policies that have not kept up with the price of inflation, we long ago cut away anything that could even be remotely considered "fat" from our budgets.

We're well beyond cutting the "fat". Continuing previous policies and making them worse with further cuts requires cost-effective non-profits like United Services to engage in cannibalism... consuming ourselves until we're no longer able to provide necessary services. You see, those 86% "extra" outpatients we saw could not get other supports they need. Neither could those 50% "extra" clients who came to us in crisis. We could provide assessment of their behavioral health needs, some counseling and perhaps medication to help with symptoms. We could not help them get adequate housing, sign up for benefits to help them pay for medical and behavioral health treatment and medications, job training and employment supports, or parenting supports – all the issues that complicate their mental health and substance abuse treatment. With level funding in the last two budgets, and cuts so far this year and proposed for next year, coupled with increased costs, we just have less to offer to significantly more people in need.

And what then, you might ask? Then, the state will be required to provide these essential services – only they will do so at a substantially higher cost to the taxpayers. The dynamics of how United Services and its private provider colleagues fit into an overall system of cost-effective government is not complicated. The fewer clients we can see and provide necessary care for, the more people who will show up in hospital emergency rooms, jails and prisons, shelters and media reports, all at an increased cost to the taxpayers at a time when we should be striving to save money, not spend more.

While I hope wisdom and reason will prevail on that and other issues, I'm not here to point fingers or assign blame today. Republican or Democrat... legislative or executive... state agency or non-profits, taxpayers and children and families in need... we're all in the same life boat together. The lessons learned of how we came to be here are important, but what is more important is how we're going to pull together, and find a solution.

Putting more holes in the lifeboat we all share is not a solution... nor is the continued cannibalization of cost-effective non-profits that achieve positive outcomes at the least cost to Connecticut taxpayers.

Thank you.