

Good afternoon/evening. My name is Heather Gates. I am the President/CEO of Community Health Resources. We provide behavioral health and social services in central and eastern Connecticut to all ages. We have contracts with all of the states' human service agencies and with the judicial department through the court support services division. We serve the most severely mentally ill and emotionally challenged adults, adolescents and children and their families. Our services include outpatient, case management, residential, in-home interventions, mobile crisis response, partial hospital, and therapeutic foster care. We also provide supported housing, family violence education, homeless prevention, and a host of other basic supports. We serve over 8000 adults, children and families a year. This represents a 17% increase from the previous year while at the same time much of our funding remained flat. I am here today speaking as the co-chair of the public policy committee of the Connecticut Community Providers Association.

The rescissions implemented in November, in concert with the mitigation plan proposed to the legislature, make across the board cuts to the infrastructure of the human service system in Connecticut. In addition, the cuts to the supports for individuals and families attack the most vulnerable and impoverished citizens of Connecticut. In every regard the cuts affect every aspect of the lives of the people we serve. Housing supports, mental health treatment, case management, services to new mothers, prevention programs, access to in-home treatment etc., etc., etc. Over and over again cuts have been made that will contribute to an increase in the use of emergency rooms, jails, homeless shelters, and nursing homes. This budget is an example of short terms savings that will create higher long term expenditures. It is bad human service and fiscal policy.

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We have eliminated positions and services, we are on the brink of eliminating positions that help bring kids back from out of state residential programs, and we are bracing for further cuts. Bit by

bit, through lack of a clear policy direction, the community based system is being eroded and damaged.

We recognize that the state is in a very difficult financial situation, but it does not make sense to cut the most effective and efficient part of the human service system – community based services.

Weakening this system at a time when demand is higher than ever makes no sense. Please restore the cuts in the mitigation plan to the human service accounts.

