

Testimony Appropriations Committee

Governor's Budget Mitigation Plan

Jeanne Nodine

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Good afternoon Senator Harp and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jeanne Nodine and I am an East Hartford resident. I have been before you several times to advocate for myself and other consumers on budget cuts to services that are important to our lives.

I am here today to tell you that I am against any budget cuts in Governor Rell's Deficit Mitigation Plan to certain services. The cuts to HIV/AIDS prevention and syringe exchange would put this state at risk for more consumers to become infected by this virus by sharing needles. Health care fund cuts would mean that we could not afford our medications which are vital to our lives and can cost up to \$1,500.00 per prescription. Without health care, we would end up in nursing homes costing the state even more. Supportive housing cuts are just going to make it worse also. There are enough homeless people in Connecticut.

This is the result of overcrowded or closed shelters and non-affordable housing. I would be in the streets if not for my housing assistance because of my low income. The people who live with HIV/AIDS are at great risk for death without stable housing due to some medications requires refrigeration and you do not have one in the street. You also have a tendency to not care about taking them. That is my first set of concerns.

Now on to cuts to prescription coverage, Medicaid and Mental Health. With a proposed cut to these services, many people would not be able to afford the necessary medication to keep them stable. I am talking about mental health medication, co-pays and services. People who live on a fixed income would have to choose between purchasing a medication with a co-pay or food which is also necessary in life. I feel that the people who are low income residents of this state are trying to be forced out.

The cuts that have been made every year are more harmful to those on low incomes than to those who have jobs to afford them. The co-pay was initiated years back for those who received SAGA and Title 19. The people on these programs have them because they are low income or below poverty already. When they were in effect years back, I remember it was difficult and most people had a paper to forego the co-pays. There is not enough mental health services already in this state and many suffer from this. They are trying to bring people out of institutions and back into society. Without proper care on the outside, it would not be possible for these people to try and survive in the community. Mental health medications are very important and to not have them makes the consumer more apt to suffer from the illness that put them on the medication to begin with. I know because I have become suicidal due to not having my mental health medication. I ended up in an in-patient program to get my medication.

This was due to lack of proper care from my mental health provider. I have been on medication for bi-Polar disorder for many years and only needed to be on a mood stabilizer. The providers that I was seen by were prescribing me medication not needed and probably more harmful to me. Please take into consideration that the cuts to mental health services could lead to more cases like this and more people being in psychiatric facilities because of improper care. I urge you to take into consideration that the low income, and those who suffer with lifelong illnesses are the ones who are most affected by the cuts in this Deficit Mitigation plan and not those with good jobs.

Thank you.
