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**KEEP THE PROMISE COALITION**
**KTP Children's Committee**
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**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**
**March 2, 2011**
**In Favor of the DMHAS Budget Proposal**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Candelaria, and members of the Health and Hospitals Subcommittee. My name is Cheri Bragg from Keep the Promise, a Coalition dedicated to ensuring that a comprehensive, community mental health system is created and sustained in Connecticut.

The Coalition strongly supports the DMHAS budget proposed by Governor Malloy. We believe it is largely a fair and balanced budget. We applaud the Governor's efforts to focus on protecting the safety net when it comes to preserving community mental health services and supports for adults and children in Connecticut.

Specifically, the proposed DMHAS budget includes dollars for 150 units of Supportive Housing, a proven, cost-effective solution to ending homelessness. The attached dollars for services and rental dollars are key components that promote success in Supportive Housing for individuals and families with mental illness and other service needs.

The Coalition also supports the continued funding of private, non-profit mental health providers. It is critical that we continue to invest in services, particularly during tough economic times when the demand for services increases. The budget also funds additional caseload growth for Young Adult Services to meet the increase in demand for these specialized service needs. Investment in transitioning youth and young adults is a preventative and early intervention, cost-effective strategy the Coalition strongly supports.

The proposed DMHAS budget continues to invest in cost-effective, community mental health strategies by expanding community care through Money Follows the Person (MFP) and the DMHAS Medicaid waiver for diversion and discharge from nursing facilities. It costs an average of $214 per day to serve someone in a nursing facility, but just $54 per day to serve the same person in Supportive Housing. It costs an average of $1200 per day for inpatient psychiatric care. This budget also provides dollars to discharge people from hospitals who are ready to rejoin their communities. After Connecticut closed two large, state psychiatric hospitals in the mid-90's, thousands of people ended up stuck in nursing facilities. Others remained unnecessarily hospitalized, largely due to a lack of community housing options as well as services and supports. Continued investment in community-based care is the right move for people and a sound investment of state dollars.

Again, the Coalition would like to thank the Governor for his long-term vision and focus on cost-effective, community care vs. costly, institutional and emergency care and urge committee members to pass the proposed DMHAS budget.

We would like to caution the committee that many people who are served by DMHAS will be negatively impacted by proposed co-pays in the DSS budget including some people testifying here today/tonight. We urge legislators to reject any measures that would limit access to treatment and services, measures which will only cost more in the long run as people turn to costly emergency care.

On behalf of the Keep the Promise Coalition, I thank you for your time today. I'd be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Cheri Bragg
Keep the Promise Coalition Coordinator