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**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
March 2, 2011, DMHAS Budget
Jenna Rai Miller**

Good afternoon, distinguished Chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am here to ask you to view those living with emotional challenges through a wellness paradigm. Recovery is possible with intact or improved supports, and the Governor's proposed budget recognizes this fact by protecting mental health services and affordable housing options for people who have serious mental illnesses.

My name is Jenna Rai Miller, I live in Norwalk. I am a person in recovery that had been living with severe pervasive mental illness since I was 4. I attempted suicide at age 8 due to the abuse and violence I experienced in my family, both my parents were emotionally ill. My life was a nightmare until 6 years ago. My treatment plan including therapy, medication management as well as effective coping skills and strategies has saved my life. Availability of medications has eliminated the need for further hospitalizations and management of my symptoms.

I'd like to pose the following questions for you to ponder:

- What if you had a family member or a loved one that was faced with medical challenges, would you turn your back on them?
- Would you not want the best, most cost efficient treatments to be available to them?
- Would you want the government to limit their access to medications that work effectively or might work for them? Pre-authorizations that they would have difficulty negotiating? Co-pays they couldn't afford?

Not only would these limitations and challenges impede their stability and recovery; they might give up entirely and lose the will to live.

I am grateful that I was able, many years ago, to attain safe affordable housing which promoted self efficiency aiding in my recovery. I believe that the Governor's proposed addition of supportive affordable housing is a blessing and a necessity.

Mental illness is an insidious disease affecting large numbers of people in which relief is difficult and its symptoms excruciating. Cut-backs to the mental health system are threatening not only to myself but to all persons living with mental illness leading possibly to relapse and more expensive avenues, such as hospitalizations for a population of people who didn't ask to have this type of medical illness.

As a CT Licensed Professional Counselor I have been volunteering my time on a limited basis to support others with emotional challenges, that otherwise would not get any treatment because they fall through the cracks of governmental programs, not able to pay co-pays.

I am a strong proponent for parity of mental illness with all other medical illnesses and see a huge disservice to the population at large if an already strained system were further stressed. I support the Governor's budget with the exception of the co-pay proposals for people on Medicaid and Medicare Part D. These proposals will not save money and will keep people from accessing medications that can be critical to living in the community and life saving measures. Remember recovery is possible.