

**Testimony before the Human Services Subcommittee of Appropriations**  
**Re: DSS Budget**  
**Friday 3/4/11**  
**Barbara Albert**

Good afternoon chairs and members of the Committee, also to everyone else.

My name is Barbara Albert, registered voter, renter in Hartford, Advocate for Human Rights, and Multiply Medically challenged Human Being. I'm disabled, some visible, most not. I do volunteer work when able. I'm also on Medicare and Medicaid.

I'm grateful to read that major cuts to services are not in the Governor's plan. Considering what few I receive, and the ongoing lack of effective communication with D.S.S., at least some people will be able to receive much needed assistance.

However, I can barely afford co-pays now, never mind with an increase. Due to my chronic illnesses, my doctors are trying new medications, regardless of whether or not they are on any formulary resulting in additional unaffordable co-pays. I do know that covering co-pays are a lot less expensive than paying for someone's emergency care or hospitalization when they are unable to get the medication they need, not to mention less stigmatizing.

Personally, I've already cut back on getting medications. I find myself taking less, not being able to get them in the first place, and even taking expired meds. I'm still not receiving any kind of rental assistance. I keep applying, but don't hear anything. I'm still paying more than fifty percent of my disability check for rent.

I continue to feel overwhelmingly distraught about not having a qualified therapist. This is further convincing me that there is no help for me. I'm also very concerned to read that Low Income People, most of us are "Aged, Blind, and Disabled", who need this (probably the most), are still being considered as 'persona non-grata' in that we are being told that we do not deserve a Cost of Living Adjustment. I remember testifying about this same topic not too long ago: asking to keep the COLA the Federal government gave only to have it removed by the State. I am one of more than the thirty percent of Hartford's residents living under the Federal Poverty Level. In 2011, for one person, this means less than \$11,000, per year.

According to a PBS Documentary, "Unnatural Causes", where people work, go to school, where you live and the quality of your neighborhood, the housing, and the people there, and how safe it is to walk, and whether you have access to qualified medical services, even if you're able to find quality food: it all directly relates to your health - something that is not easy to have in the country's poorest city.

Meanwhile the President's \$3.7 trillion budget calls for Military spending increases and deep cuts to social service programs. The Federal Government is willing to spend \$1 trillion for war, occupation, and weapons, while 30 million people in this country remain unemployed or severely underemployed, not to mention the cuts in education, housing, and healthcare. Where is justice? Where is humanity?

Before becoming disabled, I did work regular jobs, and pay taxes, and still do. Just because I have several chronic illnesses, does NOT mean I am no longer a human being. I'd like to end with a quote by Hermann Melville, "Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds the criticisms made of the habits of the poor, by the well-housed, the well-warmed, and the well-fed."

Thank you for listening.