

Testimony on Senate Bill 9: An Act to Raise the Income Limit for Medicaid Recipients – February 10, 2011

Submitted by: Carissa Sfakios BSW

Good morning members of the human services committee. My name is Carissa Sfakios. I am a resident of Newington, a MSW student at University of Connecticut and a social worker at InterCommunity, Inc. in East Hartford.

I am here today in support of S.B. 9 An Act Concerning Medicaid Eligibility and on behalf of the Medicaid recipients I work with that are living with chronic mental illness and are in a constant battle with keeping their benefits active.

I work with one individual that has been trying to meet his spend down since May 2010 in order to get VNA homecare to help with his increasing mental health needs and deteriorating physical health.

Another client I work with has been on a spend down since 2009 and has since been paying out of pocket for medical visits. She has been unable to receive dental care as a result of the lapse in her Medicaid.

These are just a few examples of the many that struggle with meeting spend downs in order to receive crucial medical care.

The current spend down system creates confusion and frustration on the part of recipients. It also creates an expensive burden on state resources and hospitals. My guess is that raising the Medicaid income limit could help save the state money because it would decrease the Department of Social Services workload and would also prevent recipients from having to go to hospitals for emergency care because their insurance is not active. It would also allow social workers to spend more time with individuals in recovery on their wellness goals as opposed to sorting through medical bills.

Individuals that are already living in poverty are forced to pay out of pocket for medical expenses and have to forgo other basic needs in order to make health a priority.

In closing I would like to add a few points:

- Older adults, and individuals that are blind and disabled have health care needs so serious that the loss of Medicaid coverage can mean life or death.
- Vulnerable older adults and individuals with disabilities must not be left behind as the state expands access to health care. There is no justification to have different income standards for different populations.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill and for hearing my testimony today. I can take any questions or comments that you may have.