

Testimony for DMHAS Public Hearing 1/22/2012

Respectfully Submitted: Kristie Barber

Good Evening to the Co-chairs of the Appropriation Committee, Senator Harp and Representative Walker, and all the committee members. My name is Kristie Barber, I am the Region II Regional Mental Health Board Executive Director and I am the newly elected Vice Chairperson for Keep The Promise (KTP). I mention my new elected Vice Chair position to stress that I have taken on an additional position because I believe in advocacy for the mental health system of care for the very important people that are treated and achieve recovery goals.

I would like to first commend and support the 1% increase to Nonprofit providers that is proposed in Governor Malloy's budget. I will say this is a step in the right direction to recognize the efforts and declining income of the dedicated staff who deliver essential services .

I am opposing the proposed LIA or Low Income Adults Medicaid program restructuring/modified benefit plan. A modified plan would limit access to services specifically in instituting caps on office visits or limiting the length of stay in nursing home care, etc. As I understand it when the initial plan was initiated to increase revenue to the state, the number of recipients grew rapidly, partially because of the quick turn around time to make the switch. The new recipient numbers have leveled off and there isn't any reason to cut services to this population as DSS suggests. People on LIA or Husky D already have limited services by nature of being a Medicaid recipient. I also think to be a legislative body that is proactive, it would make sense to keep benefits in tact and model a solid structure for the new healthcare reform plan.

This is a natural segue to the State Basic Health Program proposal that is in the works for Connecticut residents. This is for what I call the working poor, who are persons not eligible for Medicaid and do not have access to affordable employer-sponsored coverage. The income guideline is between \$14, 856-\$22,340 (133%-200% of the poverty level). It is the legislature that will ultimately vote on this benefit program and in the advocacy community we support mirroring the Medicaid program that exists today to ensure better healthcare. I would also say that the spend down system in place is a administrative nightmare and should be handled differently for all recipients. I think it is the biggest impact on impeding access to care for people with Medicaid insurance.

The Young Adults Services' budget is slated to be reduced by approximately \$500,000. This is a vital service to young people with psychiatric illnesses. There are many success stories from the young adults and I hope the program continues to be supported amply to continue the success.

Also, the Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP) budget is proposed to be cut by \$100,000 for the line item of inpatient legal services. CLRP provides many community services and this is another critical service which provides support to people who are in need of assistance for their rights as individuals in the hospital setting.

Thank you for you patience and attention.