

Testimony before the Appropriations and Human Services Committees
July 24, 2012
Medicaid Low Income Waiver 1115
Barbara Albert, Hartford, CT

Good morning/afternoon members of the Appropriations and Human Services Committees, also everyone else. My name is Barbara Albert, registered voter, renter in Hartford, advocate for human rights, and multiply medically challenged human being. I am on Social Security Disability and a 20 plus years client with the Department of Social Services. I do volunteer work when able.

I'm also a member of two of the 16 health care advocacy organizations, Keep the Promise Coalition, NAMI-CT is part of, and Ucan/Caring Families Coalition that wrote to and are petitioning the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and other state and federal officials, to stop Waiver 1115. Included with this testimony is my time line of experiences with dysfunctional DSS, from April 11th to May 12th. The following is what was suggested to add in the time line.

I qualify for State Supplement for Aged, Blind and Disabled, DSS program. I know I feel beyond despair and hopelessness, not being able to contact DSS to ask questions or request reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. I feel like it means nothing to DSS, therefore increasing feelings of nothingness and frustration in me. I need to verify everything according to the paperwork. Even though I am still indigent, unemployable and I do apply for rental assistance every chance I can. All of this information can be verified through inter-agency inquiries. Why are they not? Even though I have several date stamped receipts, from the hand delivering, that's a must. I still receive cut off notices that I didn't do the paperwork. Then I needed to go back again. I have to deal with the worsening of my chronic illnesses because of the extra stress, physical, mental and emotional. The irritable bowel flares, migraines, food intolerance, allergies, panic disorders and seizures. I was diagnosed with Lupus four months ago. There is no cure for autoimmune diseases and I have five or six now. I'm still dealing with bed bugs and cockroach infestations. What is left of my belongings are still in garbage bags. My dad died last July 20th, and I am still grieving. I feel beyond grateful for my friends.

December 6, 2011, the same date the Occupy Hartford site was evicted, I received a letter saying I was cut off food stamps, that I didn't get paperwork to even apply for. They were cut off the end of November 2011. I am still

involved with the Occupy Movement. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter." And "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I believe it is our civic duty to stand up for our basic human needs, and to stand against inequality and injustice. This is not just my opinion of what experiencing "help" from DSS is. Shredding the safety net and continuing to hurt the most vulnerable is not shared sacrifice. Dorothy Day, activist for social justice said, "Our problems stem from acceptance of this filthy rotten system."

DSS has been blaming their computer for probably longer than I've been a client. Automatic termination needs to stop. Automatic redetermination for people already on Medicaid, at least until they fix the problems, needs to be. Hire more workers from CT and put in an effective communication phone system so that when I call I can speak with a human being who knows how to speak with another human being.

(Would one of the Legislators please ask me to read the DSS Mission Statement?)

Please do not support approval of the DSS LIA Waiver 1115.

Thank you for listening.