

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.

DSS MISSION

The Connecticut Department of Social Services provides a continuum of core services to:

- . Meet basic needs of food, shelter, economic support and health care*
- . Promote and support the choice to live with dignity in one's own home and community*
- . Promote and support the achievement of economic viability in the workforce*

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*We gain strength from our diverse environment to promote equal access to all DSS programs and services.*

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TIME LINE PAGE 1 (B Albert)

- 4/26/11 - Went to DSS to get current Budget Sheet, previous info lost/destroyed in ongoing bed bug infestations.
- 5/17/11 - Hand delivered Redetermination Paperwork to DSS, Have Date Stamped 'Receipt' dated 5/17/11. Included all necessary information.
- 6/21/11 - Received two exact DSS "Notice of Discontinuance - Failure to Redetermine Eligibility, Aid to the Aged, Blind or Disabled, (Redetermination paperwork included doctors letters, and all other requested verification)
- 6/24/11 - Went to DSS, with doctors letters and all other <sup>new</sup> updated info. Filled out, sat window with DSS worker on computer, was told still need to get proof from Bank concerning closing of my 10¢ Savings Account closure.
- 6/23/11 - Redetermination results - complete info.
- 6/28/11 - Faxed 10¢ saving account info to DSS case worker concerning when account closed.
- 9/12/11 - Another redetermination results (from 6/21/11), No info about State Supplement for Age Blind or Disabled, or Therapeutic Diet.
- 10/1/11 - Received Another Redetermination paperwork
- 10/18/11 - Hand delivered to DSS, all verification except doctor's letter updating my medical condition. Got date stamped 'Receipt'
- 11/3/11 - Hand delivered to DSS, Primary Care Drs letter. Got date stamped 'receipt' - Any 'Results continue not having info about State Supplement for Aged Blind, or Disabled, and Therapeutic Diet.
- 12/6/11 - Two exact letters from DSS, "Discontinuance of Food Stamps, Didn't Complete Review Process" "As of 11/30/11, A week earlier."
- 12/7/11 - Called and spoke with DSS Regional Management, Faxed last set of Redetermination Paperwork and All Verification to them, Received a message on my answering machine, that afternoon: "You're all set."
- 12/9/11 - Received a DSS notice about "General Information", Said I applied for Food Stamps on 12/1/11 - NOT, I had a new case worker - same one, I never got to speak with for the last 2 1/2 yrs, or the supervisor, or their supervisor. (Not for lack of trying) Still nothing about State Supplement for Aged Blind or Disabled (Have been receiving since end of '80s)
- Also received DSS pamphlet - "Help for People in Need" (looks good on paper)

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Time Line Page 2 (B. Albert)

- 12/15/11 - Spoke with DSS - Garfield White. Told me because I am on three different programs at DSS, 1) Medical, for Age Blind or Disabled; 2) Food Stamps; 3) QMB, that I now have 3 case managers. (Great, 9 people I can't ever get ahold of, don't even know who they are). He also said "No one received notification on having different case workers." (DSS got away with violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by being ineffectively communicating - notifying, no one.)
- 12/16/11 - Received Food Stamp results. Still nothing about State Supplement for the Age Blind or Disabled, and Therapeutic Diet. (My Disability and SSI Cost of Living Adjustment doesn't start until 1/1/12, - What's it doing already on this paperwork?) "Food Stamp Eligibility is 12/11 to 11/13" - we'll see.
- 1/26/12 - After several attempts to inquire about my incomplete budget sheet, I spoke with Regional Management.
- 1/29/12 - Received a 'fill it in' Budget Sheet - can't read it all.
- 5/4/12 - Received DSS redetermination paperwork, again. Hand delivered 5/11/12. Worker behind glass started putting info into the computer. I requested a reasonable accommodation in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Dealing with this so often was stressing me out so much, I've developed more chronic medical challenges. (No one should know about all of what I have, nevermind actually have to). Also found out my case worker, of the last 2 1/2 yrs, is no longer employed here. Was given a first name and phone #, and "she's brand new," I was told. Have a date stamped receipt.
- 5/15/12 - Received DSS Redetermination results. Included ALL necessary information. When I saw the letter was from DSS, I remember thinking - what else do they want from me? That they are able to cross check on a computer through other pertinent agencies? (Not exactly what I thought. Close enough)