NORTHWEST
REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH BOARD, INC.

Central Naugatuck Valley Catchment Area Council #20
Housatonic Mental Health Catchment Area Council #21
Northwest Mental Health Catchment Area Council #22

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Testimony before the joint Appropriations and Human Services Committees
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Good day to all of the legislators gathered here on this summer day, outside of the regular session, to listen to all of us regarding our concerns about the proposed cuts to the Medicaid Low Income Adults (LIA) Program (Waiver)and related concerns about DSS. **Thank you for your time and attention.**

Most if not all of you know what the Regional Boards are, and what we do. You know we represent the grassroots and all of the stakeholders of mental health and substance abuse services. You know about our evaluations and needs assessment processes.

Well, I am here because of the latter. There is a serious problem out here that you should be aware of, so that your decisions will be informed and people can get the care they need and be the healthiest that they can be.

I want to tell you a story about a person I know well, who lives in our Region V area, in Waterbury.

- He has been working hard to improve himself.
- He works hard to give back to the community.
- He has served on many of our program reviews – the most of any individual volunteer in our region.
- He recently married the love of his life; they have been together many years and it was "the right thing to do."
- He was instrumental in bringing a special certification program to Waterbury so that many consumers would learn the skills needed to get jobs in the system, helping other consumers to move ahead in their recovery. He was enrolled in that class and looking forward to graduation and getting a job.
- And it all came crashing down around his head.

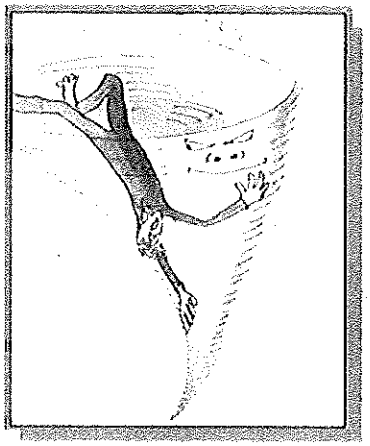
Why?

A combination of DSS policies and the severely short-staffed DSS offices.

The timeline of the slow-motion train wreck will be familiar to many here:

- He got married. This changed his status and he was thrown into a spend-down.
- That meant **no Medicaid/health insurance** until he had paid – out of a pretty penniless pocket- for $1500 of health care.
- With no insurance and no cash, he was soon taking the last of his medications.

- He found himself **without 4 of his psychiatric medications**. He was becoming symptomatic.
- He rallied enough to get all the bills together, get them to DSS, and show that his spend-down was covered. He even got the name of the worker. But the wait – even with everything in order would be another 7-10 days.
- Fewer meds. Condition deteriorating further. He did everything he could to keep it together; he had what is called a WRAP plan for wellness. He was hanging on by a thread.
- He called DSS to check progress, and was told that the paperwork had been lost. He had to start all over.



The thread he was hanging on by - it broke.
He went to the ER, in pretty bad shape.
He was admitted to the hospital.
He was there for six days, only just released yesterday.

There is an old proverb that starts
"For want of a nail the shoe was lost,"....
and ends:
"....the kingdom was lost. All for the want of a horse-shoe nail." That sums up this man's experience quite perfectly.

This man lost his wellness, and missed his classes. He should be able to make up the classes and graduate and get his certificate, but that has been put at risk. So getting that job is also at risk.
His family relationships have been damaged.

The ER visit and hospital stay all, I am sure, cost much more than the meds he would have continued to take.

I know that no one at DSS was intentionally trying to mess up his life. They are already short-staffed, so all of their paperwork processing is severely impaired.

Going to a massive recertification process will only make that worse. They are already moving mountains with a shovel.

Please don't make it worse than it already is. That will **damage lives**,
and **it certainly is not cost-effective**.

Thank you.