

I'd like to thank the Chairpersons and members of the Appropriations Health and Hospitals subcommittee for allowing me to testify in support of increased funding for community based healthcare providers that treat individuals suffering from everything from mental health issues to developmental disabilities.

My name is Linda Farrell and I am from South Windsor.

I am here to testify on behalf of increasing funding to community based mental health providers. I am no stranger to dealing with mental health issues. I work at the Institute of Living and am a parent to a 17-year-old son who suffers from mood disorder, anxiety, depression, poly substance abuse and his greatest battle, which is against Impulse control disorder.

The impulse control disorder led him to jump from my moving vehicle. At which point he became a level one trauma, intubated, spent five days in ICU, and suffered a traumatic brain injury with five skull fractures and a blood clot. He has also had two arrests. Within the past year my son has had 11 hospitalizations, 2 partial hospitalizations, 2 in home programs and 1 out home program. We are plagued with Manchester Memorial Hospital being the only hospital in the state willing to give my son a bed. Everyone else refuses him.

I am also a seasoned health care worker with 28 years in the field. My jobs have included but not limited to Managing DDS group homes along with direct care work, supervisor in DCF group homes, direct care in Mental Health group homes and I currently work as a Psychiatric Technician at the Institute of Living. At the Institute I am also a Crisis Intervention Trainer, and work in the recovery room for Electric Charge Therapy patients. I am no stranger to Mental Health.

While our war on mental health continues we have fought many battles. After his accident the hospital sent him home with me because no hospital in the state would take him due to his brain injury. I was forced to take leave from work and care from him. I have yet to recovery financially.

He had several hospitalizations following and when the hospital wanted to send him home and I knew it was too dangerous, I had to threaten to take a neglect charge and refuse to bring him home. Fortunately, I received help from the state child advocacy office and this got my son a bed. Most parents would not be aware of the advocate and would have suffered further.

To give you an idea of the danger we faced let me explain what his axis IV is and what that means. My son generally has an axis IV diagnosis ranging from 30-50. A 30 being: "Behavior is considerably influenced by delusions or hallucinations or serious impairment in communication or judgment. Sometimes incoherent, acts grossly inappropriate, suicide preoccupation, or inability to function in almost all areas, stays in bed all day, no job, school, home or friends. Child frequently beats up younger children,

defiant at home, major impairment in several areas such as school, work, family relations, mood, or thinking." These are a few of the symptoms but many more apply.

My son's illness came to a head in December when he threatened to jump off my second story deck and admitted to taking up to 10 Klonopin a day. This led us to Manchester Memorial Hospital again. Manchester hospital in true form wanted to send him home after being there for only two days. I called DCF and asked for voluntary services. Again, another services most parents have no idea is even available. DCF voluntary services forced the hospital to hold him as they understood the danger of him returning home. In order to do this they gave us Husky on top of our private insurance. I truly believe they only took this seriously as it was in the wake of Sandy Hook.

They then placed him in Rushford Stone gate, a 28-day rehab and mental health facility at the cost of 16,000 dollars. After completing that program his clinician found him unsafe to return home and transferred him to Rushford Academy where he will remain until July 5th. Thus giving him a total of 7 months in-patient hospital stay when all is said and done. If I had not had the knowledge of voluntary services we would have remained at the mercy of private insurance and would still be repeating the hospitalization cycle. Or worse, any one of us could have been injured at he hands of my son's mental illness.

DCF is currently completing an application for my son for DMHS young adult program for when he is 18. I have applied for disability and he was denied. How the system can deny someone with a thirteen-page Neuro psych evaluation and the history mentioned above is a mystery to me. I have filed an appeal and am waiting to hear. According to the state child advocate the North East is notorious for denying people and making them jump through hoops. Please tell me what is right about this system?

No child, parent, or sibling should ever go through what we have experienced. Imagine your child jumping out of your car, hospitals denying him care, being afraid to be in your child's presence because you fear what he is capable of and no one caring. This is just a slice of our journey. Parents like me, and the people I care for, need you to restore cuts and increase funding to DMHAS, DDS and DCF not-for-profit services in our state.

Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today.

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