



supportive housing
WORKS

CLRP: A lifeline for our mentally ill

Honorable Representatives and Senators:

My name is David Rich and I am the Executive Director of Supportive Housing Works, a collaborative effort to eliminate homelessness along the I-95 Corridor in CT. I live in both Lakeville and New Haven, CT. I am here today to testify in support of the CT Legal Rights Project (CLRP) and their request to fully reinstate \$490,000 for housing advocacy for the mentally ill in the legal services line item.

According to "Reaching Home: A Ten Year Plan to End Long-Term Homelessness in Connecticut," 33,000 experience homelessness at some point during the year. Worse still, homelessness in Connecticut is increasing. Emergency shelters are full; the length of stay in shelters has increased; and turnaways have increased by over 200% from 2001 to 2011. At any given time, approximately half of Connecticut's homeless people are experiencing long-term or chronic homelessness - that is, without acceptable permanent housing for more than 90 days. A significant percentage of today's homeless population suffers from chronic mental illnesses, so there is an increased demand for existing services as well as a need for new programs and services that address the complex needs of today's homeless population. As the "Reaching Home" reports states, "the enormous public cost of this emergency care is exceeded only by the misery of people needlessly trapped in years of homelessness."

On my day job I spend most of time developing housing for the homelessness and am extremely heartened by your and the Governors' vision and commitment to provide substantial recourses for the housing the homeless. We have, however, realized through our work that just building housing for those most in need, including the mentally ill, is not enough; we need strong and courageous advocacy within CT to champion the needs and rights of those who are most vulnerable. We have such a champion in CLRP.

At a cost of a little over \$1000 per client CLRP has provided housing advocacy services to over 300 individuals annually for the past decade. Highly skilled and motivated lawyers work for CLRP stating at \$40,000 a year in salary. This is an extremely cost effective means to ensure safe and supportive housing for those most in need. And far less costly than the alternative, hundreds of emergency room visits hospital stays and expensive inpatient treatment. Study after study has demonstrated that the additional cost burden to the state of NOT housing the mentally ill ranges from \$20,000 to \$100,000 a year.

As a board member I can attest to how hard CLRP's executive team and staff have worked to tighten their belts through absorbed layoffs, a salary freeze, furlough days, and a pension reduction to protect client services. However, without these state funds, most of CLRP's housing advocacy services to the mental ill will end. CLRP simply does not have other options available to them to continue to provide these invaluable housing services.

Thank you for your time this evening and for your continued commitment, as a vital partner of CLRP, to advocate for our most vulnerable residents so that they too may have what most of us take for granted- a safe decent and independent place to call home.

David B Rich, February 15th, 2013

continued

The Connecticut General Assembly

Joint Committee on Appropriations

Sen. Toni Nathaniel Harp
Co-Chairperson



Rep. Toni E. Walker
Co-Chairperson

November 13, 2012

Patricia Rehmer
Commissioner
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
410 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

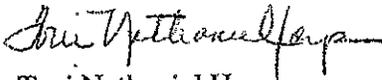
Dear Commissioner Rehmer:

We are writing in regards to funding for the Connecticut Legal Rights Project for housing advocacy. It is our understanding that there may be some confusion regarding our intent for continued funding in the next biennium.

Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP) has had a \$350,000 grant for ten years from the Melville Charitable Trust that funded 80% of the agency's housing advocacy and that will expire at the end of this year. The revised FY 13 budget included \$175,000 for CLRP to continue its housing advocacy, which represented what was needed for the last six months of this fiscal year. We anticipated that the funding would be annualized in Fiscal Years 14 and 15. It is our hope that the Governor's proposed budget will reflect annualized funding for CLRP's housing advocacy.

We would be happy to discuss this matter further. Please contact us at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,


Toni Nathaniel Harp
Co-Chairperson

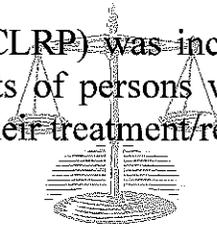

Toni E. Walker
Co-Chairperson

cc: Benjamin Barnes, Secretary, Office of Policy and Management
Alan Calandro, Director, Office of Fiscal Analysis

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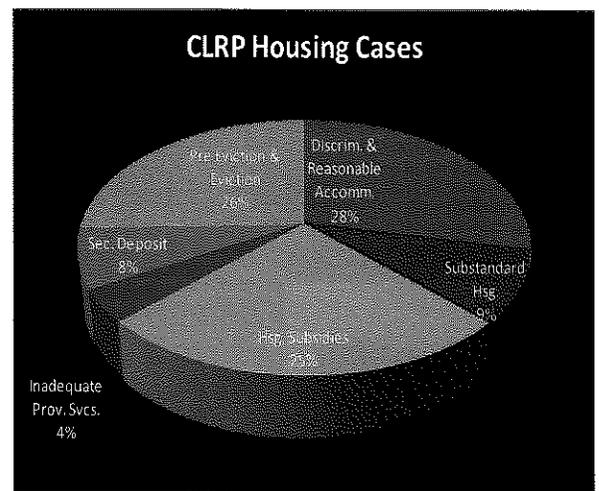
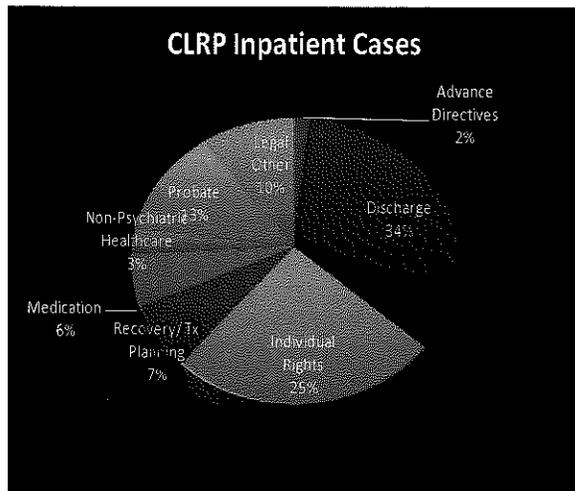
CONNECTICUT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT

The Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP) was incorporated in 1990, under the terms of a Consent Order, to protect the legal rights of persons with severe and persistent mental illness served by the state on matters related to their treatment/recovery and civil rights.



On average, CLRP represents the following types of clients annually:

318 inpatient
363 housing



CLRP receives state funds to represent clients (1) institutionalized in DMHAS facilities; or (2) whose stable housing is threatened. When a 10-year grant that funded most housing advocacy expired in December of last year, **\$175,000** was put in the state budget to cover that loss for six months, with the expectation it would be **annualized to \$350,000** this year to continue statewide housing advocacy for DMHAS clients. Instead all housing funds were cut and funding for inpatient services were reduced to \$499,378.

The **NET RESULT** of cuts in the DMHAS Legal Services line item is a nearly **50% FUNDING REDUCTION**.

There is no money for housing advocacy	\$350,000
Funds for inpatient advocacy were cut 22%	\$140,000
	\$490,000

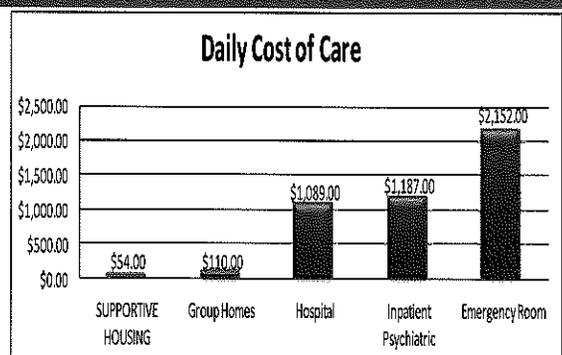
CLRP NEEDS \$490,000 TO SUSTAIN INPATIENT & HOUSING SERVICES

CLRP'S ADVOCACY SERVICES ARE COST EFFECTIVE...

Advocating for timely discharges with adequate supports substitutes community services for expensive hospital beds.

Stable housing supports the recovery of clients in the community and prevents costly emergency room visits and hospital stays.

Without CLRP's services, the State would spend much more serving clients in expensive settings.



CLRP's staffing level has already been reduced from twenty-two to seventeen through attrition and layoffs. There has been a two year salary freeze AND monthly furlough days, in addition to pension and benefit cuts.

FURTHER CUTS WILL DEVASTATE THE PROGRAM!!!

For more information, contact Jan VanTassel at (860) 262-5042 or jvantassel@clrp.org

"We with disabilities either physical or mental are reassured knowing that we have the Connecticut Legal Rights Project, Inc. behind us. Thank you." A.K. and J.M.



"I was very frightened with my Section 8 challenge. And I was also scared because this type of serious stress can/does bring on psychiatric consequences. The wonderful way I was treated helped lessen my fears. It is that special care and the understanding of how this affect one like me (bipolar) that make CLRPP so wonderful. I am very grateful. Thank you" – C.K.



CLRPP represented more than 40 tenants living in a condemned building in Willimantic. Threatened with eviction and potential homelessness, CLRPP negotiated interim housing arrangements, permanent apartments and rent assistance subsidies for our clients.

"I want to thank CLRPP for the supportive and speedy way they handled my case. I am so grateful that CLRPP exists. It made all the difference for me. Without this free service, I would not have had the courage to stand up to the housing authority. Thanks to CLRPP I am no longer homeless. J.D.F.



*"The service I received went well above anything I expected. They provided exceptional service with kindness and care and gave me more help than I ever expected."
Bobbi-Jean Mitchell*



*"I cannot say enough about the services I received from CLRPP. More people should be informed about your services. You do a great service for those that need it".
-Claudia Wilson*



*"We got the help we needed from your staff, which definitely saved one or both of us from complete disaster in our mental illnesses. That is an enormous gift."
– Bill and Alice Cuccinello*

