Testimony in front of the Health & Hospitals Subcommittee of Appropriations
February 15, 2013
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Good evening Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon, and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is Paul Acker, co-chair of the Keep the Promise Adult Committee, Coordinator of Social Rehabilitation at InterCommunity in East Hartford, and a person in recovery from mental illness.

I'd like to speak to you tonight about several issues:

First of all I'd like to stress the importance of funding for young adult services statewide. The young adult period is full of important life changes and decisions and the critical transition to adulthood. Mental illness often makes these changes and challenges more difficult over a longer period of time. The importance of age-appropriate, individualized services can mean the difference between healthy interdependence and lifelong systems dependence. Receiving specialized young adult services shouldn't depend on your insurance and where you live. At InterCommunity we realize the importance of these services. We have an unfunded young adult program that is limited in scope and size. To quote one of the young adults, "Having supportive staff and friends made a difference in my getting through college." Our modest young adult program is helping 14 people who have a vocational goal make positive change in the lives. InterCommunity currently serves about 200 young adults who could qualify for these services if we had the funding to increase capacity.

I also want to talk about the 5% rescission followed by a 1% C.O.L.A. being annualized. This means that it will take more than five years to get back to present funding! The most recent 5% rescission meant two frozen positions and a staff layoff at InterCommunity. We are already at bare bones levels. I've heard that other agency heads have had to make the decision to eliminate whole programs. Both decisions impact employment, working families, and most importantly service delivery to people in our communities. I would urge you to reject the 5% rescission decision and not lock the mental health system into a 1% Cost of Living Adjustment per year.

Finally, I'd like to urge you to reject the proposal to eliminate the Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Committee. Keep the Promise Coalition has no stance on this issue, but I personally feel the elimination of this Oversight Committee on which I serve is short-sighted. During this period of uncertainty, in terms of serious budget concerns and the dawn of the Affordable Care Act, we can't afford to risk losing progress made. The Oversight Committee has had success in its original charge and we will need some

measure of consistency as we forge ahead. The fiscal costs of the Oversight Committee are a minor investment compared to the benefits of broad stakeholder involvement to improve mental health care in CT.

Thank you for your time.