

Testimony of Lee Russell to Appropriations Committee, Friday, 15 February 2013

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of this committee:

Good Afternoon.

My name is Lee Russell and I would like to testify against the making permanent the 5% rescission on grants to non-profit mental health organizations such as InterCommunity of East Hartford.

I started attending InterCommunity in January 2009. I have no idea where I could have gone otherwise, having been unemployed and uninsured. I currently see a therapist, a Community Service Team counselor and a psychiatric APRN at InterCommunity. I also volunteer there as tutor in computer usage.

When I first started Group at InterCommunity I ate poorly, bathed and changed clothes infrequently and had difficulty getting up in time for the sessions at 1:30 p.m. I started feeling less alone and isolated by attending group, and began to look forward to going. After about three months I started attending Common Ground, InterCommunity's social club, regularly. I began having lunch there and started talking with other members. It was a comfortable, safe place where I could go to just read or drink tea and not stay isolated in my home.

I have seen many people's lives improve with the help of the services of InterCommunity: get jobs, manage their depression or other problems or simply be able to interact with other people. I think some people have nowhere else to go.

I think that InterCommunity uses it's funding efficiently. I don't find anything luxurious at the place, and there have been changes to improve client services implemented since I started coming. They have, for example streamlined the medication prescribing system and intake procedure. Also there are regular treatment plan updates to monitor progress and reassess needs.

I think that any cuts to InterCommunity's grant won't truly save money, just shift and increase costs elsewhere. There could be increased relapses in substance abuse or behavioral problems.

Thank you for listening to me.

Lee Russell

Glastonbury