InterCommunity

Health Care for the Whole Person

Testimony by Kim Beauregard, LCSW
President & CEO
Intercommunity, Inc.
Before the Appropriations Committee
February 27, 2015

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Kane, Representative Ziobron and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide testimony regarding this year's state budget proposal.

My name is Kim Beauregard and I am President & CEO of InterCommunity, Inc. InterCommunity is a nonprofit agency that strives to improve the quality of life for individuals and families who need mental health, addiction and primary care services.

For over 37 years, our agency has helped Connecticut residents by promoting the belief that anyone walking through our doors, regardless of age, background or financial status, has the capacity to recover. This belief, coupled with the commitment to high quality and innovative care, helps over 4,000 people a year to realize the valuable strengths and talents that make them respected members of our communities.

Our agency – and the dozens of individuals who will testify here tonight – have coalesced to bring to your attention the devastating effects that the budget cuts before you would have on the lives of the clients who profoundly rely on these services.

The Governor's plan to have lower income households purchase health insurance through Access Health CT (AHCT), rather than be covered by Medicaid, would have a damaging impact on the services of InterCommunity and other mental health providers. As you know, this proposal was rejected 2 years ago by the General Assembly, which argued that premiums, co-pays and deductibles under AHCT are far too expensive for many of our lower income families who rely on Medicaid coverage. We believe that the Governor's proposal would lead to an increased number of uninsured individuals seeking far more expensive emergency room care.

InterCommunity, Inc.
281 Main Street
East Hartford, CT 06118
860-569-5900 860-569-5905 Fax
www.intercommunityct.org

Additionally, the Governor's $25 million reduction in state grants to mental health and substance abuse providers will ultimately gut the system that serves our clients in Connecticut's outpatient clinics. We know that Medicaid rates will never be high enough to cover our chronic population without a robust grant system in place. As responsible advocates and decision makers, we owe it to this vulnerable population to continue to deliver on the financial promises that we have made.

The ramifications of these cuts go beyond statistics, numbers and dollars and cents. The challenges we face in confronting these reductions is a moral and potentially a legal dilemma. As providers, how do we abruptly end our responsibility to deliver medication management? How do we provide for clients without allowing them adequate timetables to find new providers?

As a Local Mental Health Authority (LMHA) in this state **InterCommunity is mandated to service our clients** with the infrastructure and the safety net that makes our existence indispensable.

It is additionally important to note that the role our agency plays in our local communities casts a broad net beyond simply providing for the healthcare needs of these chronic patients. The care we provide prevents suicides, curbs crime, promotes employment opportunities and most importantly, gives our clients the chance to build strong, healthy families. Clearly these are solutions to problems that we cannot truly measure.

Our agency also continues to broaden our scope of services by providing primary healthcare and expanding our abilities to help residents through additional substance abuse treatment programs. As a growing agency with over 300 employees, we have become an economic driver throughout the state.

As the President of InterCommunity, I see the hurdles and obstacles our clients face each and every day and I see the true value of our work in providing them with health, stability and an opportunity for personal growth.

I know this because their struggles are my own. For nearly 30 years I have been a provider and an advocate for recovery in our state. I know the importance of the work that we do because I am proof that these services can provide people with a chance to thrive.

The role that organizations such as InterCommunity serve in our communities is personal for me. I am not a victim of the tragic circumstances that befall too many of this displaced community because I have been the product of the immeasurable benefits these services provide.

Through progressive, high quality heath care, recovery is possible.

It is vital for each of us to truly understand the value that agencies like InterCommunity have in our communities. The essential services that we provide are the backbone of support for the residents of this state who desperately need our care.

Tonight, I hope you will listen to the people who rely on us, as they impart to you their stories of hope and recovery.

Thank you.