

As a person in recovery from mental illness and as a person that has worked in the mental health field for over thirty years, I personally and professionally know that we cannot sustain the gains that we have made if the DMHAS budget is cut in any area. We have fought for people to recover their lives and live in the community as productive citizens. People now have hope that this is possible; however, this reality exists because of the many services, programs, and agencies that support us. Connecticut Legal Rights Project has to be fully funded so that we can keep our homes in our communities and exercise our human rights. Discrimination cannot enter into our new hopeful lives. If we do encounter it we have to know that CLRP will be at our doorstep or at our place of work. We cannot afford to lose what together we have won. The Regional Boards have to be funded as they have continued to educate the public and evaluated our programs so that we are offered the best choices to recover and maintain the services that we may need. When I was diagnosed with bipolar illness over forty years ago, I was told that I would never work again or have a meaningful life. Along with many, many fellow advocates, we know that life can be beautiful and we will never walk in shame again. We are proud to speak before you today and we have the right to demand that our budget be restored. We cannot afford to lose another life.

Dr. Karen Kangas