

**Written Testimony for the
Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Health and Hospitals**

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As a mother who has walked side by side with my son and witnessed the devastation that mental illness bring to ones life, I know tragically what happens to a young adult when they are not able to obtain the appropriate care.

My son, Bob, has been treated for psychiatric symptoms since the age of 3. He received a diagnosis on the autism spectrum at that time. Beginning at age 13, Bob additionally started displaying symptoms of psychosis. He has had ten (10) psychiatric hospitalizations since age 13. He ran away from home twice during psychotic episodes, requiring me to call an Amber Alert on him. I had to call the police on my own son! He once went missing for over 24 hours, only to surface at a psychiatric hospital in another state! He physically attacked a nurse on the psychiatric unit once in the hospital stabbing her. I still have no idea how he ended up there and I still have no idea why he attacked that nurse. I have lived my son's nightmare too many times.

Bob's treatment on the Clinical Neuroscience Research Unit at the Connecticut Mental Health Center (CNRU/CMHC) saved his life. While on the in-patient unit at CNRU Bob was continually given amazing care from his entire team; the Doctors, nurses, and day and evening staff were remarkable. Bob was able to connect over time with the clinicians and staff and learned to trust them, which was critical in being able to treat Bob's symptoms. Furthermore, by taking the time to get to understand and know Bob, they were able to ameliorate his symptoms and recommend critical outside interventions that have turned his life around. The particular interventions that were critical to Bob's recovery were (1) finding medications that ameliorated Bob's symptoms but did not cause intolerable side effects that led to his refusal to take them and (2) finding him appropriate transitional housing at Vista Vocational & Life Skills Center and being thoughtful and patient with his transition there.

Specific aspects on the CNRU that made Bob's and my experience there unique were (1) that it was a unique training environment for young doctors such that they took and had the time to get to know Bobby and figure out how to help him. They talked about his case with local experts at Yale in autism and schizophrenia. He had many doctors, nurses and staff to help him. (2) They were abreast of the latest psychiatric research that allowed them to try interventions that were not known at other hospitals and (3) most of all, the staff at CNRU understands how critical it is to ones recovery that the patient needs time to trust the staff to open up to talk about their illness which allows the clinicians to not only find the appropriate medication but in addition and as important to educate and care for the patients caregivers.

Bob has schizoaffective disorder with psychotic features, pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified and obsessive-compulsive disorder and learning disorder not otherwise specified, an extremely complicated diagnosis. The care on the in-patient unit was exceptional because of the continued training and research that is conducted by CNRU. No other psychiatric unit had been able to give my son the time and care needed to not only adjust his medication to a therapeutic level but to finally find the right "cocktail". The research conducted at CNRU significantly increases the chances of stabilization not only for patients who are blessed to be admitted to the unit but allows their findings to help other clinicians provide the most effective care for those with mental illness.

Needless to say in light of the many horrific tragedies recently connected to mental illness it is incredulous and inhumane to decrease funding for Yale's research at CNRU. I was so proud of the state of Connecticut to have in their hospital a research unit, for me it showed that we are a state that cares for this so vulnerable and many times forgotten population who have the right to receive the appropriate care and research funds as are given to others with devastating illnesses as cancer and aids.

My son has at times had the potential to end up dead or on the front page of the newspaper. He does not have that potential right now. We were fortunate to get unique and outstanding care at a time when it was critically needed from the CNRU. He did not receive that everywhere. It changed and saved his life.