

Dear Appropriations Committee,

My name is Tracey Scheer, I live in Branford, and have been an advocate for improving access and coverage for mental health care, especially for children. All my work is volunteer based; most recently I was President of the Boards of the Friends of Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital and President of the Board of the New Haven Symphony Orchestra. I have also served on the board of LEAP in New Haven, and the Parenting Programs at Yale Medical Center. I have never been an employee of any hospital.

The Governor has proposed to cut \$443,000 of a State contract with Yale that supports the work of faculty at the Connecticut Mental Health Center. This cut would cut support for psychiatrists currently treating over 500 seriously ill patients. The Governor has also proposed a \$786,000 cut to the CT Mental Health Center's research budget, which would result in the loss of jobs of over 100 individuals who work in the interest of patients with mental health issues. By the way, the Center serves patients regardless of their ability to pay.

Do we really want to step back in time to regard those with mental illness and limited funds not worthy of care?

Do we want to see patients with schizophrenia wandering the streets, not receiving care and ending up in prisons or emergency rooms? What about those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? Or any one of scores of other treatable mental conditions?

Research has shown that the mind is susceptible to disease like any other organ in the body. People with mental illness are not weak, or less human- they are simply afflicted with a disease. To allow populations of diseased people to go untreated is unthinkable to me. When Adam Lanza attacked Sandy Hook Elementary, the state saw up close the cost of untreated mental illness. Do we need a repeat to wake up to the importance of this type of medical care???

By the way, I understand that the CT Mental Health Center's research generates over \$800,000 in indirect costs for the state, so cutting the research budget would actually result in a net loss to the state!

I implore you to reconsider where you make cuts this year. Everyone has their pet programs. I'm a great advocate of the arts, for example, but I would hate to see a play, festival or concert be funded while the poor mentally ill go untreated.

Please think about this. Families dealing with these illnesses suffer terribly, even with good treatment. Without it, many lives will be reduced to hellish experiences. Research and clinical care in this area should not be compromised, and in fact, should be supported at even higher levels.

Thank you for your consideration.

*Tracey Scheer*

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