

**Written Testimony from Alexandria Papp  
for the Appropriations Committee  
Regarding**

**H.B. No. 6824: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017,  
And Making Appropriations Therefor And Other Provisions Related to Revenue**

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, I am **Alexandrea Papp**. I am the Director of Employment Services at the Mental Health Association of Connecticut and a resident of Waterbury. I would like to take this opportunity to submit testimony related to H.B. 6824 and oppose reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I have been working for MHAC for nearly three years. I began as an Employment Specialist, providing direct services to individuals with severe and persistent mental illness and assisting them with finding and maintaining competitive employment. Frequently this involves working with individuals who are receiving SSI, SSDI, SNAP, or other financial assistance, helping them find ways to become less dependent on those programs and more dependent on their own earned income.

Staff who work in programs such as ours are altruistic. We do this work because we see the difference it makes in a person's life to see them earning their own money for the first time in twenty years. We do this work because we want to tip the scales away from dependence on financial assistance programs. We see the people who used to panhandle on highway exits holding steady jobs and being productive members of our cities. We see the effect on mental health recovery - decreases in depressive or psychotic episodes in the individuals we work with.

What we also see is what would happen to these people if we were not providing these services. We see the slippery slope back to mental illness, and the massive expenses associated with lengthy treatment, and the insufficient means for individuals to pay for that treatment, if these preventative services aren't available.

As I have transitioned from direct care to a supervisory role, I have learned a great deal about how DMHAS funded services and supports affect our communities. The state might see

our health and human service system as a costly one, but for those of us on the front lines, we see how much would have to be spent if we weren't here, and how much less could be spent if we could do more.

The services and supports provided by DMHAS are invaluable to our communities. It is for these reasons that I ask the Appropriations Committee to not cut funding to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. While I understand this is a difficult budget year, I ask that you do not balance the budget on the back of the health and human services system, which is critical to the overall success of Connecticut. Not adequately funding DMHAS and other social services can result in insurmountable expenses to the state – both in terms of monetary expense and human lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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