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The Lighthouse
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Scott Milliard
20 Hennequin Road
Columbia,CT 06237

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker
and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Scott Milliard and I am a registered voter in
the town of Columbia.

I am hear to testify on the Governor's Proposed Budget.
I believe that we will all regret the cuts to the Department
of Mental Health and Addiction Services. I would like to
propose that the Appropriations Committee be aware of
the circumstances that we are in.

I'm especially concerned about the budget in regards
to the Eastern Regional Mental Health Board. This board
serves over 40 rural towns in eastern and southeastern
Connecticut. I meet with the Eastern Regional Mental
Health Board every month, so that I am informed of any
changes that can affect me. On a personal level this board
has helped me to become more aware of my circumstances
and the power that I have to make them better. When I
had to pay a large deductible for my mental health
treatment, the staff helped me to write letters to improve
my situation. The results of these advocacy letters is that I no
no longer pay a co-pay for doctor's visits.

I hope that my concerns for the mental health needs of
Connecticut's citizens are recognized. Thank you for
listening to my concerns.

Good afternoon Senator Bye, representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is David Slivinski and I am a resident of South Windham.

I oppose any cut to mental health that is related to school or housing. I will say that some of the staff should be cut and replaced for the horrible job that they do. For example, the case manager that can't get someone a Safe Link phone because he doesn't know how to get one. Or when it takes eight months to get a doctor's appointment. I like to be asked "how do you feel" instead of being told how I feel.

I have had a spinal cord injury along with having dyslexia. This makes me feel depressed at times, but despite this, I Do Not Give Up. I attend school and work on my disability every day.

So when I hear there is a plan to cut 25 million dollars from the poor, I laugh to myself. If you are short 25 million, it is the easiest place to take the money from. I suggest starting at the top. Just turn down the heat, cleaning your own offices and taking out your own trash would be a place to start.

There are safer ways to find the money, then taking it from the people that need it the most. So shame on the state of Connecticut for these proposed cuts, and shame on all of you, if these cuts are allowed to pass.

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Bonnie Eldridge and I reside in Willimantic, Connecticut. I am the face of mental health. I am here to testify against the proposed budget cuts to mental health. United Services has been apart of my life for five years. I receive therapy after the passing of my husband. My case manager has left the agency and hasn't been replaced yet. I am a member of the Lighthouse Clubhouse, where I attend every week to socialize with others. Some of the activities that I am involved in include going to the gym to work out and attend a variety of wellness groups.

Without these services, I feel it would be detrimental to my health and recovery. I would also, like to mention that I am opposed to the proposed cuts to the Eastern Regional Mental Health Board that Jennifer Gross is the Executive Director of. Jennifer is responsible for about 47 towns in eastern and southern CT. The region area of 47 towns is the largest of any regional board in the state.

Jennifer has helped me to write advocacy letters to legislators and others to get action and results regarding some issues regarding health spend downs, etc. She has also hosted candidate forums in our area, so that others and I can make informed decisions on who to vote for. She understands mental health issues and educates legislators, police officers and other individuals about what it's like to have a mental illness. She has developed a resource book on mental illness and the services that are offered in the community to these individuals.

Please reinstate as much of the funds to mental health as possible. Thank You for listening.

Good afternoon my name is Thomas Hope and am registered to vote in the town of Willimantic. The \$585,000 will directly affect my life in the following ways.

The treatment I receive at United Services with a psychiatrist keeps track of my stability. My medication affects everything I do. I also see a therapist who helps me maintain my independence in the community and activities that enhance my life.

I receive vocational services through The Lighthouse a program of United Service. This program is to support people who have a mental illness to look for work.

The Lighthouse clubhouse offers support groups, a lunch program that serves lunches 5 days per week for only \$2 and free if you volunteer. A van is available to social activities in the communities and shopping. There is a laundry room for members to use. Craft groups, Wellness groups, Trips to the gym for people to work out are also offered.

I do take advantage of the "renter's rebate program" which helps me pay my high electric bill that increases in the winter. Energy Assistance is another program which is important to my winter grief. Dial-a-ride is important to people who don't have transportation.

I was able to hold down a job as a crossing guard for 12 years because of all the programs I have spoken about. I maintained an apartment which is also a blessing for someone who was homeless for a short period of time. My sobriety has been maintained for eighteen years.

If the services are not available to me it could lead to a relapse with shame and guilt. Hospital care is necessary, we need the best treatment available. We are important people.

I hope this testimony will be heard with a listening ear. The budget cuts are many. I speak for many and try to stand up for people in the same situation. This is who I am and what I am about. My whole point to this testimony is to help you see how we need better services and more money in the budget. We need a raise in the budget, not a decrease.

Thank you for listening and hope you will take action on this.

Sincerely,
Thomas Hope

Dear CT Legislators Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of The Appropriations Committee.

My name is Chris Mezzarone, and I am a registered voter of the town of Windham. I am the FACE OF MENTAL HEALTH.

What does the Lighthouse and the Eastern Regional Mental Health Board mean to me? My mental health issues were diagnosed by United Services. I attended an outpatient day program for six months called Sachem House. When I finished my treatment, my case worker at United Services suggested that I go to the Lighthouse. My worker felt that I would be an asset to that program. I followed their advice and became a Lighthouse member. Since becoming involved: I help host monthly catchment meetings, participate in weekly house meetings and serve on the Board of Directors for the Eastern Regional Mental Health Board. I am also a member of Keep the Promise, and attend a monthly meeting in Middletown for this. I have been a member of both of these organizations since 2008.

This is my second testimony for a mental health cause. I presented my first testimony back in 2010. I have received 14 awards for my work in mental health. I have been recognized twice by Reliance House, once for the best spokesperson and a second time for being the best student. I have received the Michael Kerrs scholarship three times. I have completed the legislative advocacy training, and am a legislative advocate for the Windham area. I am currently a student at QVCC, and am enrolled in a public speaking class this semester. Mental health funding has enabled me to attend college to further my education and advocacy efforts.

I am opposed to the 585,000 cut to the five Regional Mental Health Boards. The Eastern Regional Mental Health Board has been an important part of my life. My involvement with this board has helped me to become a stronger advocate, both verbally and in writing. Please restore all or as much of this funding as possible.

Thanks for Listening.