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**Fax Cover Sheet**

Date: Murray

To: 3-4-15

From: Debbie

Fax No.: 860-882-0240

Re: Testimony for Friday

There are 3 pages including this cover.

Comments:  
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**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**In opposition to the Governor's Proposed Biennial Budget**  
**March 6, 2015**  
**Carol Gee, Waterbury, CT**

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

My name is Carol Gee and I am a member of the Independence Center in Waterbury CT. I am testifying in opposition to the proposed cuts to DMHAS. These cuts would be hurtful for many reasons.

Before I was a member of I.C. I was not on medication and my life was a wreck. My body does not produce the chemicals I need to be stable and function right, so I take the medications I need to be stable.

Medication and the therapeutic socialization of the Independence Center helped me to live a full life and to be a more productive person in my community. The happy smiling faces of the Center helped me feel more welcome among people and I learned living skills such as cooking, cleaning, writing, using and understanding computers. It also helped my voice be heard by letting me write articles for the newsletter. This is not all. The Independence Center also helped me with work, housing, food and nutrition and healthcare.

With the acceptance and support I receive from the Independence Center I graduated from Advocacy Unlimited and I also graduated from the MERGE Program and received a Mental Health Certificate. With the help and support of the Independence Center I am going to Bridgeport University to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in psychology. Without receiving the therapeutic acceptance from the Center I honestly believe I would not achieve these things.

**Testimony from Matthew Rowe  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015  
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 Matthew J. Rowe and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I am a consumer of DMHAS and am a club member of Independent Center in Waterbury, CT. I have suffered from mental illness and/or a brain disorder. I have heard voices since I was 16 years old and am finally getting the help I need.

The services I receive at DHMAS include med management and counseling. I also attend groups which help me maintain my independence. I attend the quit smoking group and went back to school as a result of attending services at the Independence Center. I also maintain an apartment after being homeless for two years. I have 4.5 years of sobriety as well. I have been advocating for mental health services and have been looking for a part time job. I oppose the cuts because we need all the help we can get and I don't want to end up in the hospital again.

Dr. Martin Luther King once said "the Arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." Mental illness is the poverty of the west. Please don't cut funding again. This affects my recovery and my life.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Matthew J. Rowe  
Waterbury CT

Testimony from *Koreen Sumpter*  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015  
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 Koreen Sumpter and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I am a knowledgeable honest male, with hope to strive for success, and that is getting a job and then going to trade school and college so I can get a good career. I am a member of the Mental Health Association of Connecticut's Independence Center, and a resident of Waterbury, CT.

I came to this program, because I need a job, so I joined a job employment service, and they sold me about the Independence Center in Waterbury, CT. I still don't have a job. See, I just graduated High School March of 2011 from Waterbury Adult Education with a G.E.D. diploma, and now I am searching for a job for 18-21 months so I can continue my education and get a good career. These services at the DMHAS-funded Independence Center are outstanding. The staff and members together are very encouraging in helping me have motivation in life to succeed and for empowerment. I really appreciate their services and I hope that their budget doesn't get cut because they're real good for helping people in need.

Without these services, I just would be out there in the street waiting for a job with no help or friends. Thank God for the Independence Center in Waterbury, CT.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Koreen Sumpter  
Waterbury, CT*

**Testimony from Angela Benson  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015**

**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 Angela Benson and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I have been using DMHAS services since I was first diagnosed in 2000. The first 2 years, I was in and out of both hospitals 13 times. DMHAS services were able to help me come clean from using drugs to self-medicate!

DMHAS was able to get me help from Griff's House, also to become a member of the Independence Center. While going, I became a council member and gave out food bags. I took the Advocacy Unlimited (A.U.) course and became a member at the Discovery Center. Both clubs have been very helpful in my recovery.

I am pleased to say I have not gone back into the hospital in over 8 years, due to the support that you want to cut out of the budget. I am concerned what might happen do to this!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Angela Benson

*Waterbury Ct*

**Testimony from Cynthia Williams  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015**

**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 Cynthia Williams and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I am a mental health consumer and attend the Independence Center. I re-joined two years ago and in this time I have completed goals that I have set for myself such as working on my High School diploma, learning to type, working on sobriety, and quitting smoking.

I look forward to coming to the center and I got my self-esteem back after a brutal attack in 2012. I lost my left hand and right leg when I was 6 weeks old. Life was already a challenge and mental illness runs in my family. My cultural heritage makes it taboo to seek mental health treatment. Since being at the Independence Center, I've learned a lot, have a better relationship with my children, and see that people in my family may have issues. I feel I can help people suffering from mental health and substance abuse issues. Please do not cut the DMHAS budget so that we can continue to have the lifesaving medical services.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Cynthia Williams  
36 Columbia Boulevard  
Waterbury CT 06710  
[Cynthiawilliams0318@gmail.com](mailto:Cynthiawilliams0318@gmail.com)

**Testimony from Karen Wilkie  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015**

**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 Karen Wilkie and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I am a member of the Independence Center (IC). I am asking that the budget for mental health not be cut. Members of the IC have already lost many services, such as cuts in hours of operation, weekly trips that help integrate into the greater community, and the amount of time for social interaction. I have P.T.S.D. and a dissociative disorder, D.I.D., as well as reoccurring depression. The staff at the center are very supportive of me as I recover and heal. My counselor and I are a very good match as well as the Mending Arts Facilitator. I miss the social part of program (playing cards, board games, dance, and the weekly trips). I would not be doing as well as I am if it weren't for the IC.

Thank you for your time and listening.

Karen Wilkie

Waterbury, CT

**Testimony from Brian Leyh  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015  
Regarding**

**H.B. No. 6824: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017, And  
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Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, I am Brian Leyh and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I have Post Traumatic Brain Injury and also am Bipolar with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. I go to the Independent Center to see my counselor Debbie. We share special interests. I work with the Homeless and with those who have alcohol and drug abuse. The Independent Center is a haven for those with mental handicaps. Does the government realize that we are not different? We are special. The fact that some can overcome their handicaps is not widely known. But we ourselves realize this ourselves. I realize it in myself and have seen it in others.

Will we go down as known as the age of indifference? Will we put our resources in worthwhile things or the most worthy, as the psalmist says. Saint Gregory of Nazienzen said in "Pauperum Amorem" to his congregation: Brethren and friends, let us never allow ourselves to misuse what has been given to us by God's gift. If we do we shall hear Saint Peter say to us: "Be ashamed of yourselves for holding onto what belongs to someone else. Resolve to imitate God's Justice and no one will be poor."

In the end Saint Gregory lets the significance of what he was saying to be known. Quote: "His gifts are not to be deficient in any way, because he wanted to give equality of blessing to equality of worth, and to show the abundance of his generosity."

God shows his generosity on all. Let your conscience decide today if you are in accordance with this all." All of this shows the worth of dignity. It is the dignity of the human experience.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Brian Leyh

**Testimony from Dan Gaines  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015**

**Regarding  
H.B. No. 6824: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017,  
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Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, I am Dan Gaines and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I am a member of both Mental Health Association of CT's Independence Center and Discovery Center. I am a resident of Waterbury, CT. I became involved with DMHAS in 1992 and used their services to remain in the community with zero hospitalizations to this day. Right now I only make use of the Discovery Center and the Independence Center for socialization needs. If I didn't have either Center, I would become sicker and sicker due to lack of human contact.

I oppose the cuts to the DHMAS budget because closing either Center would be detrimental to my mental wellbeing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dan Gaines

**Testimony from Valerie Feliciano  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015**

**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 Valerie Feliciano and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

Please do not cut the Department of Mental Health and Addition Services programs because we need it because it makes me feel good about myself. It helps me to get a job and also I learn a lot about taking care of myself and learning to meet new people. We have new ones coming in and they need your help. Where are we going to go if these programs are cut? The worse is about to happen. Please do not cut the program.

Thank you.

Valerie Feliciano  
Waterbury, CT

**Testimony from Victor Buchelli  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
March 6, 2015**

**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 Victor Buchelli and I'm here to share my concerns regarding H.B. 6824 and proposed reductions to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget.

I suffer from C.O.P.D., asthma, and I'm diagnosed as manic depressive. I am also in a 12-step support program and have been for over 12 years and 34 weeks. I live in HUD housing, an efficiency in Naugatuck, CT. I receive public assistance. It's not much when you're already struggling to juggle a pitiful budget.

I enjoy attending Independence Center. It provides for me a variety of services for the benefit of my wellbeing. One of these programs includes going back to work and becoming a productive citizen of my society. Another example is the many educational workshops it has to offer. Some of these include mental health, substance use treatment, and life skills, which in fact make one truly independent, and it feels good being a contributing writer for the newsletter.

Time calls for Health Equity. I believe the state should consider focusing on addressing the needs of the people with mental health, instead of cutting the budget. DMHAS and all of its programs it has to offer are a fundamental and integral part of our community. Without these components in place, the mentally, physically challenged, and homeless would have no place to go. I ask the state to not cut the funds to these programs. They are vital to people like me. It has been said, "The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few." Let's keep this promise.

Thank you.

Victor Buchelli  
53 Conrad Street, Apt 27-D  
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