

Public Hearing Testimony of William Young on Friday, March 6, 2015

My name is William Young. I am a resident of the State of Connecticut and the City of Hartford. I also serve as an officer of InterCommunity, Inc., a private nonprofit provider for those most in need. I am also a person in recovery.

You are hearing from many Connecticut residents – adults, children, care givers, providers – about the personal and social impact of the proposed budget reductions. I do not believe that it is an exaggeration to say that the size and nature of the funding cuts would move us into a public health crisis – reflected immediately in some areas and simmering with future serious consequences in others.

As you have heard from others, our starting point is a service system which has been chronically underfunded in many areas, resulting in a highly stressed system of care, especially for those who have the least resources and often the most complex and difficult circumstances and conditions. Additional reductions to services already on the edge financially due to a combination of inadequate funding, low rates of reimbursement and cumulative “getting behind” will, I predict, result in serious elimination of services, reduction of services, and loss of locations around the state – an especially difficult problem for the many who already lack access to resources and transportation.

In addition, history teaches us that cutting spending for lower cost community based services often results in the use of many higher cost, less effective, less appropriate emergency services.

You may be thinking: isn't there money to be saved through further efficiency and elimination of marginally valuable services? Couldn't we save money and achieve our fiscal goals that way now? I would never argue that we shouldn't find ways toward efficiency and cost savings. We are stewards of public funds and take that very seriously, and work at it every day, and have year after year for some time. The entire service system, though, is now on the edge. Chronic underfunding, lack of mechanisms to address underlying cost increases, very old reimbursement rates which haven't changed, lack of adequate staff compensation have brought us here – as providers there is only so far you can go before you have hit the minimums, and then services and sites will disappear. We are now at that point after years of the cumulative impacts, and the current proposed reductions to a stressed system will result in serious losses, with both the short term and long term consequences to the citizens of Connecticut, all of us.

Thank you for your consideration and work. Now is the time to be clear on what the priorities are for our State. We ask you to put the public health safety net first. It is clearly at risk. Please do not make budget reductions for mental health and addiction recovery services in the budget.