

Appropriations Committee Testimony, Hearing date 03/06/2015

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is David Pogg and I live in Ellington, CT.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee today about the impact of proposed cuts to DMHAS grants and Medicaid rates will have on the many people who benefit and need the assistance that those funding sources help provide.

I come to you today not just as a provider employee, but also as a former consumer. In 1998 I was in the grips of active gambling addiction. I lost my job, was facing possible incarceration, broke the trust of my friends and devastated the relationship with my family. I was told to contact 211 from a South Windsor Police detective. He was the first person to tell me that I had a gambling problem. I took his advice, made the call and was connected with services at Wheeler Clinic. I was at my wit's end, depressed, no sense of self-worth and alienated by friends and family. But within a couple days of making the call I was engaged with services at Wheeler Clinic and began working with my clinician. She helped me to understand my addiction and we began the process of taking control of and rebuilding my life. My recovery was not easy. There were successes and setbacks along the way. As things started to get better, I made the mistake many have made before. I became comfortable and when there were bumps in the road, I gave up hope. During those first few years I was homeless for a time, incarcerated and tried to end my life. I tell you this not to elicit sympathy or pity, I tell you this to show you that recovery IS possible. But it is not a road that a person travels alone. There are many who help along the way, family, friends, Clinicians, Case Managers and peer supports to name a few. I work at 2 not-for profit agencies that will be heavily affected by the proposed cuts, Wheeler Clinic and Intercommunity Recovery Centers (formerly Alcohol and Drug Recovery Centers). At Wheeler clinic, I am the Peer Counselor for the Bettor Choice Gambling treatment program and at Intercommunity Recovery Centers, I am a Case Manager for the Recovery House transitional housing program. Both agencies serve client populations that are often marginalized, forgotten and fall through

the cracks. There are those who would say that what do is nothing more than help perpetuate the revolving door of a welfare state. I am sitting here before you, proof that they are wrong. I am alive today because of the services that I received at Wheeler Clinic. I do my best every day to help others recovery from addiction, mental illness and rebuild their lives. At the Recovery House transitional housing program we help thousands of people every year with a safe place to live and the basic necessities of life while they are in the process of building their recovery foundation. The Recovery House is a fully grant funded facility. When the impact of the proposed cuts became apparent, I thought to myself "How many people could be turned away?", "How many people could lose their lives?" because of funding cuts. The safety net that the many not-for profit agencies provide is a vital resource for the thousands of people in Connecticut suffering from mental health problems and addiction. The proposed funding have the potential to gut services and may even force some agencies to close.

Please I respectfully request that you do all that you can to stop the proposed cuts to DMHAS grants and Medicaid rates. Individuals with behavioral health challenges need your help. I need your help. Thank you for your time and your service to the people of the State of Connecticut.

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HB-06824: DMHAS Funding Cuts