
NORTHWEST REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH BOARD, INC.

Central Naugatuck Valley Catchment Area Council #20
Housatonic Mental Health Catchment Area Council #21
Northwest Mental Health Catchment Area Council #22

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Testimony for the Appropriations Committee
On the Governor's proposed budget
DMHAS expenditures and recommendations
March 6, 2015

Good evening Sen. Bye, Rep. Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Janine Sullivan-Wiley and I am the Executive Director of the Northwest Regional Mental Health Board, Inc. As background, the Regional Boards were **established by state statute 40 years ago this year to provide a community-based assessment, planning and oversight entity for mental health services.**

What is the value of all of our community connections, volunteers, community education, evaluations, needs assessment and stakeholder participation?

- The Boards provide a process that – with the RACs – **enables the state to get \$23 million in Federal funding.**
- **Community connections:** When a woman was at her wit's end about getting the critical services needed by her son, **she was directed to us.** We identified what he needed and worked to arrange it.
- **We share resources.** Our **community education** enables people to get the help they need. We provide **Mental Health First Aid training.** Last year, our board alone got over **7400 educational pamphlets and resource sheets into 40 towns and 126 locations** in northwest region of the state.
- **Developing solutions:** Did you know that the need for specialized Young Adult Services was first raised by a Regional Board? They brought in federal funds and early expertise. Now these services are helping young adults throughout the state to get what they need to recover, often no longer needing the adult system. As the healthcare system evolves, we are the perfect entity to develop new solutions to new challenges.
- **We evaluate services – including state-operated services – with an independent process that answers to the community.**
- It can be hard for consumers, family members, providers and the community to understand their sometimes divergent viewpoints. **We bring all stakeholders to the same table.** We make sure all voices are heard.
- **We are cost-effective: For every staff person we employ, there are 50 volunteers,** greatly expanding our impact for very little money.
- An employee of DMHAS described us as **“the glue that holds the system together.”**

All of that stands to be lost if the Governor's budget recommendation for the Boards' funding is not changed.

We are small but mighty. You may not know that we have been here all this time, but – like your own little pancreas – what we do is essential.

Cutting the \$584,000 investment in the boards would result in great monetary and service loss to the state. There is no way to replace what we do for anywhere near the cost of what we do this work for.

Thank you for your consideration.

