



February 10, 2016

Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:

H.B. No. 5044: An Act Making Adjustments To State Expenditures For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017.

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Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Alice Forrester, Executive Director of Clifford Beers Clinic in New Haven, CT. At CBC we are dedicated to strengthening families through behavioral health care and wraparound services that treat children and families who have experienced trauma. Last year, we provided direct service to over 7,000 children and their caregivers! We also provide professional development to like-minded organizations to better understand the impact of trauma on children and families.

We are among the 550+ member agencies of the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (CT Nonprofit Alliance).

I am compelled to share my concerns with you regarding H.B. 5044: An Act Making Adjustments To State Expenditures For the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017. In particular, the funding reductions to DCF, DDS, DMHAS, DSS and DPH are alarming; the proposed reductions would threaten critical services to children and families served at CBC – some of whom are among Connecticut’s most needy.

With 7,000+ receiving care, I have countless stories and much program information I could share with you that directly resulted from State of Connecticut funding. With time limitations I will share with you just a few important aspects of our work.

First, since 12/14/12, CBC has had a presence at Sandy Hook Elementary School (Chalk Hill School) in Newtown, CT. There we have treated teachers, students, and parents, and data indicate our impact is significant. We have a lengthy report that shows, among other things, our efforts contributed to significant reductions in post-traumatic stress disorder among students, teachers and parents. Further, given the newness of the field of mass shooting trauma, our work is providing some foundation for how community recovery can proceed in the event a similar tragedy occurred (sadly, a distinct possibility).

Secondly, our clients are often eager to share their CBC experiences. One teenage boy -- whose traumatic past was having him act out to the point where he was hitting his mother – came to us despondent and angry. With treatment, though, this boy found his way to a meaningful relationship with his mother, who is quick to boast of her son’s recent achievements: inclusion on the Dean’s List *and*

earning the “most improved player” award on his high school lacrosse team! According to the boy, whose future did shine brightly when discharged from our care: “I wouldn’t be where I am I today if it wasn’t for Clifford Beers.”

Lastly, I’ll share with you the efforts of the New Haven Trauma Coalition (a partnership led by CBC and including the City of New Haven, New Haven Public Schools, and United Way). NHTC is in eight New Haven public schools for the purpose of finding and treating children and their families with trauma histories. In doing so, we are removing barriers to care and getting to the children sooner rather than later. Because of that we can lessen the likelihood that we will see in these children the effects of untreated trauma – things like suspensions, expulsions, community violence, incarceration, heart disease, and even cancer (yes, cancer!). The collective cost to treat those things is far, far greater than the cost of the preventive care we are providing.

I have a staff of over 175, any one of whom could share with you successes like these. My staff works hard and is committed to strengthening children and families. If the proposed cuts move forward, not only will our most vulnerable friends and neighbors be affected but also I will have staff who will lose jobs. We are running a business, and there are pension and salary requirements that must be met in order to provide services. This is flat-out impossible to do when we are assured a certain amount of Connecticut dollars but then we do not get them.

Please know that Clifford Beers Clinic does not rely solely on Connecticut funding for its operations. Instead, we are working alongside the State to raise funds for exciting and innovative program design. Most recently, Clifford Beers Clinic was awarded a \$10 million innovations grant from the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare to design a health home model of care. We are in the second year of that grant and are presently looking to build new lines of business to sustain it.

But we cannot sustain much without solid budget support from the State of Connecticut. This is a simple and straightforward truth with tremendous implications.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or for additional information.

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