

**Written Testimony for the Appropriations Committee
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Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee, it is my privilege to be able to speak to you this evening on behalf of the patients with severe mental illnesses and addictive disorders who are treated at the Connecticut Mental Health Center.

I first came to New Haven in 1983 in order to attend medical school. At the time, I wasn't sure which field of medicine I would ultimately pursue, but if there was one thing of which I was absolutely certain – *it wasn't psychiatry*. My thinking was permanently, and I hasten to add thankfully changed by my medical school rotation in psychiatry at the Connecticut Mental Health Center.

It was there that I witnessed for the first time, not only the tremendous personal suffering endured by those affected by severe mental illness, but also the incredible compassion and commitment of the doctors, nurses, mental health workers, social workers and other professionals caring for them.

It was at CMHC, a DMHAS facility, that I had the opportunity to see patients who had suffered for years with debilitating depression, unremitting obsessive compulsive disorder, and chronic psychotic illness recover from their illnesses as a result of the expert clinical care.

Nearly 30 years later, as a professor and attending psychiatrist at CMHC, I consider myself extremely fortunate to remain a part of this important, and I believe highly successful, partnership between the State of Connecticut and Yale University – a partnership that celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. In fact, 50 years later, the CMHC and its staff continue to aspire to fulfill the clinical and educational missions on behalf of the Citizens of Connecticut:

1. **The Clinical Mission:** It is our mission to treat and care for those that suffer from severe mental illness and addiction. Patients come to the CMHC to receive state of the art care in specialized clinical programs for alcoholism, bipolar illness, cocaine addiction, major depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), schizophrenia and numerous other severe psychiatric conditions. They may be presenting for the first time and are new to treatment, or conversely, they may have already had extensive treatments by multiple providers and have yet to find an adequate solution to their clinical problem. Make no mistake about it,

the proposed cuts to DMHAS and CMHC will be devastating and impair our ability to deliver clinical care to patients seeking and needing our help.

- 2. The Educational Mission:** As it was for me 30 years ago, it is also our mission at CMHC to attract the very best and brightest members of society, including those in the medical profession, to dedicate themselves to the improved treatment of mental illness and addiction. I lead a training program at CMHC for psychiatrists in training, who like myself, develop the skills and commitment to care for the severely mentally ill in Connecticut. I'm pleased to note that, like myself, many of our prior trainees are in fact active as attending psychiatrists at CMHC and elsewhere within the DMHAS system caring for the underserved, indigent, and severely mentally ill. Make no mistake about it, the proposed \$70 million in cuts to the DMHAS budget will be also be devastating to our ability to train and educate the resident physicians today, and a result, Connecticut's psychiatrists of tomorrow.

Thus, in summary, the proposed DMHAS budget cuts severely threaten the clinical care and educational missions of the Connecticut Mental Health Center. In turn, the lives of the patients we care for would be dramatically impacted. For the sake of our patients, their need for care today, and their need for skilled doctors that will care for them now and in the future, please restore these funds.