



Thames River Supportive Housing Program

A program of *Thames River Community Service, Inc.*

One Thames River Place Norwich, CT 06360

860-608-5316 (cell) 860-887-3288 (office) 860-887-4146 (fax)

Email : sheilah@trfp.org

Governor's Proposed Budget FY16-FY17

Appropriations Hearing

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Thursday February 18th, 2016

Good Afternoon,

Senator Bye, Senator Kane, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron , and Members of the Committee, I thank you for hearing my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to support efforts to end homelessness in CT. I am here to speak on the impact that substantial budget cuts would have on these efforts, in particular Permanent Supportive Housing and Support Services. I am the Program Manager for Thames River Community Services Supportive Housing Program Case Manager located in Norwich CT.

Supportive Housing services offered through DMHAS funding are critical to all of our initiatives to end homelessness here in CT. They are a cost effect solution to many of CT budget concerns. Those that have experienced chronic homelessness are high utilizers of public services – crisis services, emergency medical services and jails – taxing those systems and reinforcing a cycle of dependency without truly resolving homelessness.

Permanent Supportive Housing Support Services allow participants to think long term about their lives, it provides a foundation and supports families and individuals to change from a crisis mentality to a stable, solution focused mentality. I would like to ask you to think long term for the next few moments, as I share a statement from one of the families I serve in our Supportive Housing Program, who was unable to attend, due to college and employment schedule.

“ I have been with this program since Oct 2011 and due to having a Supportive Housing case manager, I was able to get my daughter back as well as getting (Social Security) disability. I have started college and hope to open my own business one day. I have also maintained consistent housing and take my medications, which is very hard for me to do. I honestly believe that without the supportive services that I would not have been able to do these things.

Yeah, I might have gotten on disability without help, eventually, but I would probably just sat around collecting a check, not living, just being there in the present moment, doing nothing with my life. I would have never gotten the push to go back to school. I hated school but thanks to the support and encouragement that I have received, I feel like I can do it , as well as enjoy going to school and learning. Growing up I never really had support or anyone that even really cared about my needs or what I did with my life. I am not trying to make excuses on why I chose the path I did in life, but I do not regret any of it because it lead me here where I am today and I am a much better person for myself, my daughter and my wife. I am very thankful for having these services and to take away support services would not only be a loss for future or current clients, it would be a shame to not have those opportunities, knowledge, support, encouragement and so much more that supportive housing services offer. Sincerely, Alex”

In that statement alone, you hear a family reunited, not a child raised by various state entities. You hear the goal to become independent of entitlements and become a part of our small business community. You hear an improvement of self-esteem and a decrease of mental health symptoms. You hear an ability to develop relationships, a sense of community, maintain housing and attend community college. You hear a reflection of the person they once were and the person they are becoming.

With your help, we are making progress towards our goal of ending homelessness in Connecticut. On behalf of those I serve, I ask that DMHAS Support Services are not reduced and that you support the additional 150 units of permanent supportive housing required this year to reach our goal. Also, we ask that you support of the Reaching Home Campaigns proposal for \$1.5 million for rental subsidies and \$1.25 million for services in FY 17 to reach the goal of ending chronic homelessness in Connecticut.

Housing is a basic human need and homelessness is an expensive public policy concern. By investing in permanent supportive housing, you are investing in breaking the cycle of homelessness and laying a foundation for people to rebuild their lives. Ultimately, you are investing in dignity and hope for CT citizens who desperately need it.

Thank you,

Sheila Hayes-Program/Case Manager

Thames River Community Services

Supportive Housing Program

