

*Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
H.B. No. 5044 An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the F Y-17
February 18, 2016
Denise Hart, Windsor Locks CT*

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Denise Hart and I am a registered voter in the town of Windsor Locks. I work on the Warmline, which is a peer support outreach service for people who are going through a difficult time. I am also a facilitator for the Hearing Voices Network, which is a peer support group for people who experience visions, voices, or unusual beliefs. I am also an advocate for mental health services. I am here to testify on House Bill No. 5044 An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017. I am opposed to any proposed cuts to the DMHAS and any mental health services and supports, especially those that fund grants for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

We are being given an opportunity to make a difference, a significant difference for our fellow human beings who are in need of our love and support. We cannot, in clear conscience, allow people with mental illness and challenges to be victimized, untreated, homeless, hungry, or self-medicating because of lack of benefits and support. We did not choose this path in life. We all want the same thing- our basic human needs to be met and available to everyone. We are all members of the same communities. We are mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents and peers. We all want to co-exist with respect and dignity to enjoy our families, friends, and pride in our jobs, our homes, and to have the belief that we do matter and that we do make a difference. We are contributing members of our communities and to society.

Funding for mental health and addiction services allows us to be trained and educated, as well as treated. Our support system gives us an opportunity to bond, to heal, to nurture and to be creative in our arts, writings, and our crafts, as well as helping others to cope and to heal and have a better life. If we are not funding the crucial supports that people need, many may end up hospitalized. No one wants to be hospitalized and sedated, feel numb and nonresponsive, and have their basic rights taken away, such as freedom of choice.

PLEASE, we realize that there are many needs for the monies, but our basic sanity, and to feel alive and coping are not things that we can go without. PLEASE allow us to be participating members in society and not a BURDEN.

Thank you for your attention to these important services and supports.