

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

H.B. No. 5044 An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30,

2017

February 18, 2016

Joe DeFrancesco, Enfield CT

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Joe DeFrancesco and I am a voter in the town of Enfield.

I am here to testify on House Bill No. 5044, An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year ending June 30th 2017.

I am opposed to any proposed cuts to the DMHAS and any Mental Health Services.

I am concerned about proposed cuts to the DMHAS budget because the Regional Mental Health Boards, the Boards, are the liaisons to the public and they would be hit financially and in effect, wiped out, if the budget is kept the way it is being proposed.

The Boards and a branch of their cause, RCAC, Regional Catchment Area Council, help educate consumers of mental health services and their families. They also help with Housing Supports, Employment Supports, Peer Supports, Warmlines, and Specialized Young Adult Services, Jail Diversion and Mobile Crisis Services- something the Boards have helped out with for years.

This is my story: In 1984-87 I had a couple of bad years, followed by a breakdown, later diagnosed as Schizophrenia. I was committed to a local Hospital for one week and observed. Later I was sent to Cedar Crest, a State Hospital, for observation and treatment. I behaved and after one week I was given a little freedom to walk around the ward and building called Step Two. After 18 days I was released into the community. I went home to my parent's house. I was lucky I had them to help me out. Without the Boards, and the DMHAS budget to provide programs and services, there would be no one to help the

people being released in the community between Hospitals and regular Outpatient treatment and programs, like there was for me.

I now accept my diagnoses and ask for help at CHR, Community Health Resources, and an agency site, the Second Wind Clubhouse. Without all of CHR's programs, services, and capable people, I would be living on the streets or in the woods somewhere. The Boards educate the public on both sides, the consumers of Mental Health Services and their families, and the Legislators. They help with early intervention for many medical disorders, give us hope for recovery, help us search for recovery, help with money management, housing supports, employment supports, peer supports and Warmline supports. This is why we need to make sure the Regional Mental Health Boards and other crucial mental health services continue to be fully funded.

Thank you for your time.