

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
On Governor's proposed Midterm Budget Adjustments FY2017
February 18, 2016
Terri Pearsall
Putnam, CT

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Terri Pearsall and I am a registered voter living in Putnam, CT.

I am submitting testimony on the Governor's proposed midterm budget adjustments.

I am deeply concerned about and opposed to the deep and devastating proposed cuts to mental health and behavioral health services and supports. It seems that proposed cuts fall disproportionately on human and social services, and specifically heavy on mental health and substance use services. Mental health is part of overall health and a critical one at that. Thus, having previous cuts annualized and specific new ones instated will make it hard, or impossible for many, to get the appropriate and needed care early on but instead require higher cost services to be used, like emergency rooms, inpatient hospital stays or worse. Crucial to-be-annualized and newly proposed cuts include housing supports and services, young adult services, discharge and diversion services, home and community based services and employment opportunities.

Equally concerning is the proposal to roll most services into one budget line item because it would be impossible for me and the other advocates, and the public at large, to understand what is being proposed, creating uncertainty and confusion.

Let me bring to your attention that these cuts concerning the mentally ill will definitely affect the health and well being of many, many individuals in the state of CT. Your cuts are all about dollars and my concern is about a quality and healthy life for my son and many others suffering with mental illness. Without the current level of services and the same level of support he is receiving now, his mental health state will deteriorate rapidly. I've seen it happen too many times over the last 20 years. With these cuts I foresee his current mental health provider having to down size which will drastically reduce the services they can offer. Without his current level of services, he will undoubtedly fall through the cracks and end up hospitalized again and again. The old saying: 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound cure' is appropriate for this situation. His current services and support cost considerably less than a 30 day hospitalization and then another 30 or better days of rehab. Multiply that by the number of the mentally ill people living in the state of CT and you will be spending far more than the cuts you are planning on. Some of the affected might even end up in jail costing even more than a hospitalization.

As a taxpayer in this state, I urge you to protect the health and wellbeing of our CT residents by supporting essential services, supports and housing.

Thank you for your attention to my testimony and these crucial services, Terri Pearsall