

**Testimony Before the Appropriations Committee  
In Opposition to Governor Malloy's Budget Cuts to DMHAS  
Thursday, February 18, 2016  
Catherine F. Kriss, Enfield, CT**

Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Connecticut Legislature and colleagues from the Connecticut mental health system. My name is Catherine Kriss and I am currently 51 years old, diagnosed with a mental disability since 2005.

This testimony is specifically in deep opposition to the proposed budget cuts to the DMHAS budget, especially the cuts to the Regional Mental Health Boards.

As I understand it, any cut to the North Central Regional Mental Health Board would be insidious to its successful operation for people in recovery like myself.

We have a right to the quality of life like the average American citizen, but if we are constantly appearing before you, we can't get anything done to benefit society. We struggle for leadership and a community voice which is amplified by the Board, especially the Catchment Area Councils managed by the Board. In serving in office of the CACs, we can use our leadership and organizational, interpersonal and confidence skills acquired to seek gainful employment either inside or outside the organizations we currently volunteer for, depending upon our anxiety level.

Programs like the Magic Carpet bus in Enfield are vital to our community to provide access to employment, education at Asnuntuck College, Pearl St. and Main Libraries in Enfield, grocery stores, laundry facilities, medical appointments, etc. In fact, we celebrated three years of bus operation just recently. The Board was instrumental in getting this bus on the road.

Another struggle the Board helped people in recovery with is the Day in the Life Project which captured and preserved the voices of 80 Connecticut people in recovery in telling their recovery stories. Dedicated people in recovery volunteered for the training to become interviewers and conduct interviews, under the successful leadership of Larry Davidson, a Yale professor. A presentation was born and benefited locations such as CVH and several colleges. We learned that together we can change the face of the mental health system.

Please ... let's find a way to ensure that the North Central Regional Mental Health Board continues to provide much needed ballast and support to many people like me in recovery.

Thank you.