

Testimony Presented To The Appropriations Committee In Response To:  
THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE 2016-2017 FISCAL YEAR

by Cheryll Houston, Deputy Director  
On behalf of the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board  
February 11, 2016

Chairman Bye, Chairman Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Cheryll Houston (resident of Fairfield) and I am writing to you today as the Executive Director of the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board (SWRMHB). The Regional Mental Health Boards were designed to represent the community's voice: our Catchment Area Councils bring together consumers of mental health and supportive services, their family members, service providers, and appointed representatives of the towns we serve. It is safe to say that all of us recognize the very difficult budget situation the state faces this year, and we thank you for your efforts to balance the many needs of your constituents.

I am deeply troubled by Governor Malloy's adjustments to the second year of the two-year budget; specifically, the proposed \$55 million cut in funding from the Department of Developmental Services, the \$61 million cut in funding from the Department of Social Services and the \$71 million cut in funding from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

We realize that the Governor's goal of balancing the budget is important. However, it cannot be done at the expense of citizens desperately in need of *more* services, not *less*. Last year, CT social service providers lost tens of millions of dollars in state funding – painful cuts that impacted core health and human service delivery across the board. More cuts in service provision simply cannot be absorbed by the individuals and families in greatest need of our state's assistance and support.

These proposed spending cuts will further destabilize the state's supportive service system, and will seriously impact our state's most vulnerable citizens. Social services are already stretched thin – further reducing or eliminating funding for hospitals, community health centers, school-based health clinics, asthma treatment, and respite programs cannot be the answer.

I urge all members of the Appropriations Committee to recognize that human services in CT are chronically underfunded and any financial cuts will prove devastating, seriously reducing or eliminating essential services for thousands of individuals desperately in need- including many of your constituents - across the state.

Thank you.