

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee on the Governor's Budget

Public Hearing Date: February 18, 2016

Linda Pikul, R.N., MSN, BC Norwalk, CT

Re: Proposed cuts to Regional Mental Health Boards

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Linda Pikul and I am writing to testify on the budget.

I strongly oppose the proposed cuts to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, in particular the drastic cut in funding for the Regional Mental Health Boards and the Regional Action Councils.

*I am writing to you not only as a Psychiatric Nurse for over 30 years but also as a member of the Board of Directors of the Southwest Regional Mental Health Board. I can attest first-hand to the importance of the work of the Regional Mental Health Boards in our communities for some of Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens, those with serious mental illnesses. Our work is focused on advocacy, reducing stigma, and most importantly ensuring that all services are readily available and accessible to members of our community and are of the highest quality. Unfortunately, there is not a day that goes by that we don't read in our newspapers or on social media or hear on the news reports of a tragedy as a result of mental health issues. It is not long ago that our State was devastated by the tragedy of Sandy Hook. That event should continue to serve as a wakeup call to every citizen of Connecticut about the need of accessible mental health services. The mission of the regional mental health boards and regional action councils are to ensure services that are of the highest quality by on-going review and monitoring; that they are available to all persons who need them; advocating on behalf of those impacted by mental illness so that they may have a voice in the development and provision of the services they need, and lastly but no less important, working towards reducing stigma, so that no individual or family is ashamed to get the mental health services they need. The proposed cuts by the Governor would totally eliminate this vital advocacy and monitoring arm of our mental health system.*

*I urge you to restore these harmful cuts to ensure crucial services are available to the residents of Connecticut.*

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

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