

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
on Governor's proposed Midterm Budget adjustments FY 2017**

IN OPPOSITION

**H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL
YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017**

**Re: Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget
February 18, 2016**

Ralph Oriola; Killingly Connecticut

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ralph Oriola and I am a registered voter in Killingly Connecticut

Why are we still talking about severe cuts for mental health services? Why haven't we progressed to providing more benefits for the individuals with mental health issues? As you know, one in five individuals suffer from a mental illness. I would imagine that the increased rate of suicide of those suffering from mental illness concerns many legislators. I am greatly troubled by the huge proposed cuts to mental health and behavioral health services.

My daughter, Linda (not her real name) age 40, has suffered with mental illness for over 20 years. During all of 2015, her community services have decreased to the lowest point even to suggest she has recovered from her mental illness because she was able to hold a part time job paying less than poverty wages. Linda has no case manager, no therapist and a psychiatrist who sees her every 6 weeks for 15 minutes. Also, many providing services are overloaded with their case loads and don't give the time required to follow through on prescribed programs.

Linda had 4 hospitalizations during 2015 for psychosis and has had difficulty getting her medication because of changes with her insurance. Last week she called me to say things are so bad that the only recourse left is "get in my car and drive it into a tree." Fortunately her mother was able to talk her out of this attempted suicide.

What is the answer to this and so many individuals we have not heard about? Is it enough to say the problem will just go away? I implore you to continue to provide the necessary community based services which support the health of all of our citizens here in Connecticut, including outpatient services (through mental health and substance use grants), Regional Mental Health Boards and continued investments into proven and cost effective solutions such as Supportive Housing and Community Care Teams.

Thank you for your time and PLEASE consider my plea and act responsibly as if your loved one, daughter, son or grandchild was in need of our help!

Ralph Oriola
Past President NAMI Connecticut