

**Testimony before the Public Health Committee
February 28, 2018**

HB5162, An Act Requiring a Study of Funding for Mental Health Services

Good afternoon Senators Gerratana and Somers, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee. I am here to testify on HB 5162.

My name is Nicholas Barlow. I am 20 years old. My story begins on October 3rd, 2003....

I was six years old when it all began it's very blurry because I chose to block out some of that day that still scorns me.

12 children's ranging from 16yrs old to 2 yrs. Old in a three-story apartment, I had a loving great-grandmother who chose me as her favorite.

Now let's get to the really messed up part of that day...we were all sitting in the living room watching tv when my great-grandmother told us that she was going to the corner store for 20 minutes....we didn't pay any mind at all during that 20 minutes while she was out buying stuff for dinner. Our grandmother told us "don't answer the door for no one" then she closed the door and did her thing.

That would be last time I saw either one of them...

Now during that time, I had just came out the bathroom when I heard banging on the door "POLICE OPEN UP!!!!" all of us looked confused and unaware that behind that door that there was a swarm of police and DCF investigators. And that was our last time seeing each other.....you really want to know what that did to a 6 year old I'll tell you what I clearly remember sitting back in a DCF investigation car not being able to shed one tear while my big brother sitting next me was balling his eyes out crying and pleading for our mother, while my big sister was in a different car (mind you we ALL spoke Spanish) I say that because I lost it that I felt I lost all of my connection to my family. I just remember staring at her as we were pulling out the driveway, putting my hand against the window trying to reach her, I remember turning to see if I can see my sister instead I see this elderly woman and another woman running pleading begging, to take us back.

I was grilled for hours mind you I'm 6 years being grilled by DCF. I remember asking them two heartbreaking question, questions no 6 yrs. old should ever ask, "will I ever see my sister and brother again?" and the last question "am I going home?".

They put my sister and brother together and me well I was alone for years being mentally unstable, scared, withdrawn from the world, instead of helping me they put me on medication so many that I lost count I endured hospitals and mental facilities where I felt like no one wanted me. I'm not saying I was a saint but a kid should never feel unwanted I don't know how many times I can tell you that I felt the need to do such things as stealing, lying, cheating just to leave a house. Now I'm not trying to get you to emotional, this is my life I was meant to live it.

I was supposed to get adopted to a wonderful family and guess who was there, my brother and sister, I'll tell you something I never told a soul I didn't recognize them it was fourth grade to sixth grade I lived with them there where hard times and wonderful times like how I was in fishers island but tragedy struck for me once again my parents got divorced I was ten yrs old I was told by the woman who took me in and treated me like her blood. My family tells me she couldn't take care of

me anymore and I balled my eyes out, because my foster dad used me as a pawn during their divorce told DCF that she was a drug addict and didn't care about us I'm sorry I mean a mom buying ONLY organic food come on that to me showed me she cared.

Unfortunately there is no happy ending yet after that I refused to be adopted to any family who ever wanted me in the future. 12 yrs. old I get put into a group home for little children called the PDC now Danbury Safe Home I loved it I felt much better. In 7th grade, I went to Newtown high school with a new family that I found out hated me all I felt was hatred from the very first day I met them. I could not read the father I felt no emotion in him what so ever I never once felt any connection towards them.

15 yrs. old I meet the man who created me, my father...well, that's a different story for another day all I have to say is it's sad.

Dec.14.12 I was a sophomore in Newtown when the man who murders those innocent lives were taking my PTSD was re-triggered felt withdrawn till senior year at 17 yrs. old where my world all of a sudden turned upside down. I got into a new foster home where all they cared about was money, money, money. The foster mom accused me of stealing over \$600 dollars I took 40 to feed my brother and myself when there was no food in the house. I was hospitalized and I disappeared for three days. those three days felt like 300 years I'm not excited I cried and sat in my puke for two days I begged and pleaded with my sister, my best friend, not to take me into the hospital because I hated it. I wasn't allowed to be at school because they labeled me a homicidal person because all I did was the vent in my journal. I haven't written anything since that day because I feel that I may go back. 18 yrs. old I said enough is enough I'm leaving DCF. mind you I'm a failed case at DCF.

I called my father up to let me stay with him he bought me a ticket to Georgia, I was living in hell. Being called a 12 yr old schizophrenia, bi polar runaway is not okay I felt alone again and lost and I felt that he wasn't in my corner never wanted to hang out and get to know me instead he judged my character telling me that I think life is a joke and that all I did was hustle. I was sent to rehab because I was at the point in my life where I wanted to end it. I texted my father saying thank you for treating your kid like shit I hope you know this is the last goodbye as I laid down to close my eyes I saw visions of me finally being happy. I fought it, but at the same time, I wanted peace some guy tried to tell my dad's roommate I was faking it. When I lead a very quiet life I used to be full of life and it what happen made me silent four months of pain. I met this person in rehab she was a college student who tried to end her life and I said: "Hi my name is Nicholas." Instantly we became friends. We met each other after rehab and hung out. She bought me a ticket back to CT where I ended up in DMHAS. They helped me get a home and off the streets I'm 20 years old now and I survived.