Good evening Senator Osten and State Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to tell you about my experiences at my favorite place in the world. My name is Katelyn Root and I am proud to be a volunteer at the Windham Recovery Center in Willimantic, which is also known as CCAR. The center serves as a positive safe space for everyone in the community who is an addict, recovering addict, or ally to the recovery community, and I can’t put into words the importance of support for the recovery community. I am blessed to have found a home at CCAR, and I know every person that has spent time there can say the same.

Willimantic is generally portrayed as a town full of poverty, drug use, and violence. Almost any person that you may ask can list the stereotypes off easily. However, CCAR is living proof of the tightly bonded, supporting, and successful recovering population that is present in my town. As mental health and drug addiction can be viewed quite negatively, I have seen nothing but positivity, growth, and encouragement throughout my community, especially at the center. This inspires me to do everything I can to continue helping others every day.

I began volunteering at CCAR in January of 2017 and I wasn’t sure what to expect. At the time, I was struggling with an eating disorder and little did I know that walking through the doors at the center would forever change my life and place me into recovery. At first, I thought I was there to help others, and I later learned that spending my time at the center provided me with a mutual benefit that I am thankful for every day.

At CCAR, there are many meetings, activities, and services offered on a regular basis. Each of these events welcome and support anyone with any relationship to addiction. Every day there is an All-Recovery Meeting, which addresses all aspects of any kind of addiction. The center also hosts NA and AA meetings weekly. We also have a men's and women's meeting as well, which has expanded the center tremendously. These meetings are important because not only do they give the guests a place to speak their mind, but they help bring the community together, creating the supportive and welcoming environment I am able to witness.

Every week, I am given the opportunity to attend a meeting at CCAR with four other Eastern Volunteers that share the same passion as I do for the center. Being a student leader at the Center for Community Engagement at my school has given me a chance to share my passion for CCAR with my peers. Not only are we given the opportunity to provide vocational support to guests at the center, but we help to make telephone recovery support calls as well as present on issues and topics of importance throughout the semester. Last year, we were able to administer a workshop, informing the processes of the online job search. This presentation not only provided guests with resources to again become productive members of society. Services like these not only help guests confidently step back into the work force, but again, develop an impactful relationship with college students. We do not only listen at the meetings, but speak about our own lives, proving that we are all connected through one thing or another. Throughout my time at the center, I have been able to see the other Eastern volunteers grow as individuals, going out of their comfort zone and opening about their personal lives because of the positivity and support CCAR provides for us. Providing a budget to addiction recovery services will help allow us, college students, to continue to improve our relationship with the community.

It has been two years since I first walked through the doors of the center, and I find myself happier than I have ever been. CCAR has provided me with the resources and network to be the best version of myself. I can fortunately say that I am in recovery from my eating disorder, and I wouldn’t have been able to do it without the positive, influencing, and passionate people that I have met through the Windham Recovery Center.

Please don’t cut the DMHAS budget which would affect many programs like CCAR.