Testimony before the Appropriations Committee  
March 1, 2019  
DMHAS BUDGET HEARING

Latosha Taylor, Middletown

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Latosha Taylor I am a registered voter and I reside in Middletown with my son and daughter.

I am actively involved and work at Advocacy Unlimited, Inc., which is a statewide, peer-run, organization that is dedicated to improving the wellbeing and overall outcomes for individuals who experience mental health and co-occurring disorders (www.advocacyunlimited.org). I am here today to testify in support of the Governor’s proposed budget. Specifically, I will speak to the DMHAS budget.

I’ve had many life altering experiences that have colored how I perceive the world and affected how I have interacted within it. I’ve had to overcome many challenges to continue to stay in this world and thrive. Many of these challenges were labeled as Mental Illnesses which for the last 25yrs has had me in the never ending cycle of seeking services from our current Psychiatric system. A system that never seemed to help, but bound me more with the perception that there was something fundamentally flawed within me.

It wasn’t until 2010 that, through yet another experience, I found a greater purpose within myself that ultimately connected me with other peers within my home state of Arkansas, and from all over the U.S, who had similar experiences. This was the beginning of the road to true recovery for me. I found meaning and value from my experiences that empowered me to help build the only peer run nonprofit within Arkansas. I became actively involved in advocacy for others that may not know that they had one or didn’t know how to use it to describe their own experience.

Coming from a southern conservative state, we had an uphill battle in trying to get peer run services to be valued within our state. A lot of days I ended up feeling like one of the only voices in this great fight. One of the only things that continuously gave me inspiration and hope was the support from my peers in other states. I held onto the vision that I saw play out in my fellow peer’s organizations and lives. I wanted that so bad in my own state and life. However, as I was working hard to bring these services in my own state, life continued to happen.

In January 2016, I ended up making the painful decision to leave the battle with my fellow peers in Arkansas and take a leap of faith and moved to Connecticut where there was an already a well-established peer movement that I could immerse myself in to continue to have the support I needed in my own recovery. I moved to this state because Connecticut has one of the leading peer run organizations in the United States, Advocacy Unlimited.
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In moving here, I was welcomed with open arms and became employed with Advocacy Unlimited. It has added so much more value in my life to be able to continue to do this amazing work with and for my other peers.

With all that being said, I am I support of the Governor’s proposed budget as it related to DMHAS. If it were not for the services that I received while living here in Connecticut, and the availability of peer support, I wouldn’t be alive today. That is the truth of the matter.

Also, I know about the power of peer support, given that I work within a peer-run organization. Through my work I have the privilege of witnessing the lives many people transform through having access to supportive resources that go beyond the traditional clinical care.

I would like to thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony. I am open to any questions and can be available to offer further information.

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