March 1, 2019

Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Chairwomen Osten and Walker and members of the Appropriations committee,

My name is Bobby Berriault and I am writing in support of increasing the amount of state funding to DEMAS and non-for-profit mental health providers, and I want to encourage everyone on the committee as well as in the House and in the Senate to support this bill as well.

I had a really difficult life growing up. As someone who grew up in five foster homes and two group homes, who grew up in poverty and without a family, and who has Asperger’s; it is a miracle that I was able to get as far as I have in life. I am currently attending the University of Connecticut School of law, and I am able to live independently and live a fulfilling life because of the therapeutic services and other services that I was able to receive from CHR and CMHA throughout my life. Without the access to these mental health services, I would have ended up homeless or dead.

I am able to live an independent and successful life because of the services that I received from the various non for-profit mental health providers. I benefited from these services that I received tremendously. Persons with mental health difficulties can succeed when the state is willing to commit sufficient financial resources to both DEMAS and through DEMAS these non for profit mental health providers, and the reason why I write today is because I want others to have the same opportunities to succeed in their lives just as I was able to do, and my fear is that while Governor Lamont’s proposed budget for DEMAS is a good starting point, it does not sufficiently fund the various mental health programs to the degree that is needed. For FY 2020, Governor Lamont’s proposed budget for DEMAS is roughly $618 million, or $5 million dollars less than the baseline budget. For FY 2021, Governor Lamont’s proposed budget for DEMAS is roughly $636 million, or $7 million dollars less than the baseline budget.

Governor Lamont’s proposed budget for mental health services in Connecticut is not in line with inflation and with the increased benefits and wage increases that state workers are set to receive, and my fear is that our state’s non for profit mental health centers will suffer as a result. I ask the Appropriations Committee as well as all of the members of the House and the Senate to support increasing the amount of state funds to DEMAS and our state’s non for profit mental health providers, so that every person in our state can have the opportunity to receive adequate mental health services as all people deserves to live independent and fulfilling lives regardless of whether or not they have mental health difficulties and they need help. As someone who received the help and benefited from it, I can wholeheartedly assure everyone that these services do work and are needed to make our communities and our great state a better place for us all.

Thanks,
Bobby Berriault