Good evening to the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Samantha Burton. I am from Bridgeport and I am a registered voter. I am a member of a Clubhouse called Bridge House. I am also a member of the Keep the Promise Coalition. Thank you for having me and thank you for all the hard work that you do.

I am here in regards to House Bill 7148, “AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNE 30TH 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.”

Budget cuts to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services could affect so many people—including myself.

I would like to share a poem that I wrote about my personal experience with mental illness called Dear Mental Illness:

**Dear Mental Illness**

You were like a cold that wouldn't go away
I live in fear of you everyday
I felt like my mind was slowly slipping away
You made me feel like I was lost and Out of Touch
Like I didn't know which way was up
You tried to control me everyday
I would isolate myself from family and friends
Living in fear and shame
Wondering if the pain would ever go away
And if I would ever be the same
You may have knocked me down
But I got up Standing Tall and strong
Beating the odds and all
You don't define me in any way
I'm so proud of who I am today
I know I'm not in this Walk Alone
Thank you to all of the unsung heroes
Family and friends
And Advocates fighting the fight until the very end
Dear mental illness
We will rise up
We will stay strong
And we will conquer you once and for all

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my story.