Good Evening Senator Osten and State Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Lionel Harris and I am a person in recovery from alcohol and substance use. I am here today to share my concerns regarding the DHMAS Budget cuts.

I come from a home that moved from place to place, shifting from school to school. One year I live with my mother and another with my father. At times I would have to move to another state. I've watch both my parents at times fall to this addiction which made me wonder why I could not have my family eating at the table as a family unit, spending quality time together.

Molestation, Using & selling drugs, Prison time of 17 yrs. and wanting to escape reality had me to learn how to medicate through my sufferings. The Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR) has given me hope & strength to know I can be all I want to be. They provide recovery support services through all recovery meetings, trainings, telephone recovery support, recovery coaching, volunteering, referrals, resources, promoting recovery to name a few. Because of CCAR, I have been able to make healthy choices. CCAR has shown me that in order to move forward through the pain of the decisions I made, I must tell the truth of what I have gone through. I am able to allow myself to grow through necessary feelings and emotions that once held me hostage.

CCAR has given me confidence back. Encouraging me to learn through many pathways of recovery, including therapy and other supports and college. I am now a human service Major who made the dean’s list and also became Phi kappa due to my academics. I’m a leader at the college, as VP of Human Services for Phi kappa. I have been a volunteer at CCAR for over 2 years, giving back to others. I will be attending the Recovery Coach Academy next month to be trained as a recovery coach. I am honored to be given this scholarship for my volunteer commitment I gave to CCAR.

I walk through life hurting and wanting to do right but didn’t understand the process of recovery. Today I do. So many have been lost this I do know because I was one of them. Today I think things through and look for the lesson in all I see and here. Life is a gift that can be enjoyed through a healthy way of thinking, one day at a time. Please support the gift of recovery that CCAR offers to so many others. CCAR is a bridge that provides the support people need. It gives comfort, confidence and support to all. It is a very much needed medicine that is free to all.

The funding that you have control over can save so many lives. We are all human and feel as you do. We all have been affected by someone who struggles with addiction. People are still dying from addiction. Time is a healer and we can begin the process of healing by not cutting the DMHAS budget, but providing more funding. By doing this, we can reach out like a tree with branches and help others. Thank you for allowing me to be here with you today, recovery means the world to me. Have a blessed day.