Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Genevieve Muñoz. I’m a clinical social worker and 1199 delegate, and have worked at CT Mental Health Center in New Haven in three different outpatient programs for the last 7 years. Currently I’m on the Assertive Community Treatment Team, but previously was in Acute Services which performed walk-in crisis evaluations and mobile crisis. Prior to that, I managed a large caseload on a continuing treatment team.

Throughout the time that I have been working at CMHC I have had firsthand experience as to the critical service that our clinic provides to members of the Greater New Haven community. We serve as a safety net for the most vulnerable population in our region and to the community at large. We assist in the recovery of individuals with serious mental illness, serious substance abuse issues, serious medical issues and serious forensic issues. We take care of individuals who are not accepted by other providers because of the acuity and complexity of the challenges of their care, AND despite serious challenges from previous budget cuts, staffing shortages, and dwindling resources throughout the system, we have remained with our doors open and managed to continue to provide these critical services. In addition to the already challenging nature of the work we do day in and day out we have had the additional challenges of the opiate epidemic. We were the ones on the front line responding to the New Haven green during the K2 poisoning this past summer.

We struggle with large caseloads on the outpatient teams. With an average of 65 clients per one clinician, our caseloads are at an all time high. There are waitlists throughout the system for the sub-acute/transitional living program, the ACT team, Young Adult Services, Forensics, etc, all programs that require an even higher level of care. Essentially, our mental health system is in crisis. Individuals cannot access the critical services they need and now the Governor is proposing MORE cuts.

I am here today to strongly urge you to not make any further cuts to the DMHAS budget. The last major cut that occurred, which resulted in many layoffs, resulted in chaos within our system. It greatly disrupted care and resulted in a redistribution of resources from which we have still not recovered. We can’t take another hit without it having a dangerous impact on client care. Thank you for your time.