Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
HB 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING
JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.
March 1, 2019
David Olsen

Good evening Senator Osten, Rep. Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is David Olsen. I am a registered voter of the town of Brooklyn. I am here to speak to you about the DMHAS budget.

First, I would like to thank Keep the Promise Coalition, Governor Lamont, Lt. Governor Bysiewicz and legislators for the gracious opportunity to provide us the proper venue to address issues of our importance.

The main premise to our cause is the promise to allocate funding previously used for Norwich State Hospital as funding for mental health services. I’m sure we all agree to the importance of this promise being kept but wouldn’t it be great to hear new promises especially with this great new administration?

Mental health is an issue that, in my view, shouldn’t be partisan. Democrats and Republicans should work cohesively together to make mental health services and legislation that would improve the impact of our struggles with the issues of mental health. Adding funding to exercise and nutrition programs such as In Shape is essentials to improving the mental and physical health of people with mental illness. The In Shape program has aided me is losing 220 pounds along with getting off 2 psychiatric medications, insulin and blood pressure and cholesterol medications. The cost effectiveness of funding toward In Shape and like programs is evident. Funding per client should be made more uniform. I’ve seen figures of non-profits receiving around $4,000 per client and state agencies receiving $21,000 per client. This seems greatly unfair and disproportionate. Please enact legislation to distribute funding more fairly.

Also, one area I believe funding would be well spent is added mental health awareness in schools, especially in the lower grades. When I was in school, kids who were known to have mental illness were shunned and made fun of. This makes kids afraid to admit and seek help for mental health issues. If
we could lessen stigma through educating young people that mental illness is a disease just like cancer or diabetes and by no means a choice. They need to realize when mental illness is left untreated it can lead to erratic and maybe even behaviors. After all, it’s not the mental illness which causes such behaviors but the absence of proper treatment. It shouldn’t be an embarrassment to anyone to admit they need such treatment.

In closing, we are all affected in some way by mental illness and especially by the symptoms of it. So please, let’s work across the aisles to improve quality of life through improved mental health legislation.

Thank you.