My name is Thomas Hope. Good evening and thank you Senator Osten, Rep. Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee for hearing my testimony today. I am a registered voter from the town of Windham, CT. I am speaking to you regarding the DMHAS budget.

I am a person who has been dealing with a mental illness for the last 30 years. I have come inches away from committing suicide back in the mid-eighties. I was a person who had problems with high risk behaviors and put myself at high risk. I am alive today, but for the Grace of God. Truly this is a miracle that I am still here.

At age 19, I was diagnosed with mixed substance abuse. I work on my self-esteem through a group at United Services. After all these years later, I now realize that I am a worthwhile person and deserve good things.

I also live with paranoia and psychosis and a variety of other emotions and feelings. Now, I no longer need inpatient hospitalization. I make my own decisions today and have become inner directed, as opposed to other directed.

The following programs that are essential to me are the Lighthouse Program, which is a social rehabilitation clubhouse that is affiliated with United Services. The Lighthouse currently has a membership of 74 members and new members are referred to the program every week. The activities offered by the Lighthouse Clubhouse include education, peer support and community involvement and are a cost effective way to offer support to individuals who need this help.

Other programs that are essential are the Energy Assistance Program; the Matching Program. Also, the Renter’s Rebate Program, Medicaid and Medicare are also essential. These programs help me to maintain my independence as recovery is an on-going process.

I can’t express enough about the Lighthouse Program which reaches out to people with mental illness with a daily healthy lunch and by providing transportation back and forth to the club. I also work with a Wellness Counselor who teaches and works with me to have healthy nutrition and regular exercise.

Thank you very much. Thomas Hope