Testimony before the Appropriations Committee  
March 1, 2019  
Sarah Lombardo  

HB 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNium ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Sarah Lombardo and I am a voter. Tonight I am going to enlighten you about clubhouses, in particular Teamworks, and show you how it is a vital part of the mental health support system for upwards of 100 people at my agency, Reliance Health. In fact, when we moved from up on the hill to downtown Norwich, our membership tripled. We are operating on the old budget, but have more people to serve.

Senator Osten, knows about Teamworks. She came to our holiday dinner along with Representative Ryan and Representative Riley. They may not have told you about it. One thing I can tell you for sure, Senator Osten took her coat off, and Representative Ryan said that was a good sign.

To give you a feel for why Teamworks is so valuable to the state, I have drawn on some conversations had while assisting members with putting together thoughts for their own testimonies.

Over and over I heard, “gives me a place to make friends, better than a bar, get out of my apartment every day, and keep busy and out of trouble.” “What Teamworks does is give a safe place where socialization can occur. One member with a brain injury told me his flashbacks are less prevalent at Teamworks. It gives members a place to practice social skills and spend time in a place where there is no alcohol or drugs. Everyday something positive is going on at
Teamworks. Whether it is one of a myriad of recovery groups where members learn to stand up for and love themselves, meditate, make a healthy smoothie, or learn what brings them inner peace. There are more skills based groups too, such as recovery for life and dual recovery anonymous, as well as cooking matters, where members learn how to cook well for themselves on a budget.

When members first are oriented to Teamworks, they get very excited about the weekend trips. One member said she has something to do, even on the weekends. A lot of members have appointments and groups during the week, but get lonesome and bored on the weekends.

Besides having something to do, someone also said, “It gives us an opportunity to learn how to act in public” as well as “how to be a productive member of society.” “It also keeps us out of prisons.”

When people are given the right support to succeed, they will. When people have a social life, they are building connections that stimulate their mind. They have a reason to get up in the morning. In fact, one member shared with me she arranges her personal schedule around my smoothie group. This shows how when members have a place to go every day they are happier. They are not alone and depressed at home, on the brink of hospitalization. They have meaning in their lives!