Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Dan Hall. I am here today to speak about mental health services in Connecticut and the need to adequately fund and staff them.

Over the past fifteen to twenty years the state has been steadily cutting back on funding programs, closing inpatient facilities, and shrinking the area of service. This means fewer and fewer people in the community have adequate access to mental health care. For my work it means an increased workload, fewer resources and higher rates of recidivism and increased violence because the population has been pooled together. The violence in Dutcher service has increased because some patients there are poorly placed but they are there because there are fewer places to meet their specific needs in their nexus areas. We have less and less ability to specialize and give individualized treatment catered to each person. We’re less and less capable of doing person-centered planning which is crucial if we want to give the kind of care we know these patients deserve. We can’t help people if we can’t treat people as individuals.

We can’t operate the hospitals and attend to this population without appropriate staffing. The state of Connecticut and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services actually cares about its citizens who are most vulnerable and most at need. It would be a non-sequitur to continue to cut funds from these programs. It simply does not make sense. We know that the people who are most going to be affected by these cuts are black and brown people and working class people. We can do better and we must do better.

The Young Adult population is the fastest growing demographic. They’re a population of great need. Once they age out of young adult population they’re not going to be in a special population anymore but that doesn’t mean they won’t need special help & attention. Not getting the services they need as young adults will pose treatment complications further down the road. We’ve seen this – which is why they started the Young Adult Services programs in the first place.

We are charged with taking care of this population in our society. No one else is going to do it. You can put them in jail, but that’s not the place for them. You can put them in general hospitals, again that is not the right place. A lot of these patients will end up in the ER, which costs more money. You’ll be stealing from Peter to pay Paul. These people will not just disappear. The most telling indicator of a society is how they treat their most vulnerable. What does it say about us, if we are ok with cuts that will clearly harm large portions of our society that are in the greatest need?

Thank you for your time.