Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Lisa Morant. I am a Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant at Connecticut Valley Hospital, with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. I help patients develop necessary skills for transitioning out of an inpatient environment, and back into the community.

I run teaching skills groups daily and I feel it would be important to be able to work with individuals in the Occupational Therapy Treatment Room versus the residence unit. They need to experience new things, off the unit, but we simply do not have the staff to ensure safe ratios to take them off.

Recently, I’ve been able to run one group in a cottage across the street because I finally have another staff member to run it with me – we practice social skills, simple meal prep and teach them independence. We were able to do a Thanksgiving lunch in November where the patients made invitations, and got to practice hosting an event. All the patients loved the event. They love this group because they get some relief from the hectic environment on the units, they can listen to music, play games and learn how to clean up. Hiring more staff – including rehab staff – is crucial for running more of these groups. Without these services, they have limited success transitioning out of CVH.

The care here is so good because the training for rehab staff is superior. For example, we get regular on-site training in CPR, mental health, CSS safety techniques, and we’re able to participate in workshops and conferences to keep up on the most current techniques in the field. Just a few weeks ago I went to a mindfulness convention that trained us in instructing patients in mindfulness techniques. DMHAS services must be protected and we desperately need more funding for staff to be able to give our patients all the tools they need to succeed.

Thank you for your time.