Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Marva Thomas. I’m a nurse at Connecticut Valley Hospital since 2003. I started as a per diem nurse and in 2011, I became a permanent staff member. I’ve spent my career trying to meet the great needs and demands of our patients. We have had some success in meeting the needs of our patients because we have Medicare & Medicaid & JAHCO that are involved with overseeing how we implement care for these patients. We work with patients to reach their goal of discharge because that is what psychiatric care is all about. We try to meet their needs in what they’re lacking to make them a whole person so they can reintegrate into the community, whether that is with family members or an assisted living situation. It can be very difficult to place these patients out in the community because they are gravely mentally disabled and we are the home that they have. Because of the care that we’re giving them, many of them have grown to see us as their family. When they visit family, they want to come back because we are passionately trying to meet their needs in the facility. The community facilities and families don’t always have the resources or the training to meet their needs. Cutting funding for DMHAS will exacerbate this problem. Balancing the budget on the backs of these patients is inhumane.

I have observed patients being discharged to badly funded nonprofit agencies, and in no time they’re back in the hospital and in a worse state of mind than when they left. We need more education and training and implementing groups for these patients so we can meet their special needs in this facility. DMHAS needs more funding, not less, to support the patients we currently take care of. If patients are having PTSD from family trauma, attempting suicide, things like that — we need funding so we can better serve these patients.

We know these patients have severe needs. Cutting funding to DMHAS and privatizing means giving these patients even less to meet their needs, and puts these vulnerable patients at risk. We can’t balance the budget on their back. We are all one human community. Why take away the support these patients need to feel that they are a part of society and a meaningful part of the world? The richest people in this state can afford to pay a little bit more for the benefit of the most vulnerable people in Connecticut. Give DMHAS the resources we need, do not cut the budget.

Thank you for your time.