Testimony before the Appropriations Committee  
Friday, March 1, 2019  
Governor’s Proposed Budget FY 2019-2021  
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)  
HB 7148 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium ending June  
Thirtieth 2021 and Making Appropriations Therefor

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for hearing my testimony today of HB 7148: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium ... specifically the DMHAS Budget.

My name is Catherine Kriss. I am a registered voter of approximately 14 years in Enfield, CT (58th district).

Regarding continuing funding for community recovery support, I have been a proud Community Health Resources (CHR) Second Wind Clubhouse member and North Central Regional Mental Health Board (Board) member. During those fourteen years, as a client in recovery, I witness the spirit of determination and endurance. This is what our Clubhouse and the Board are all about.

First. Yes! We practice skills, support, structure, socialization and advocacy at our Club. We could liken this exercise to the known college quip: “While at college, gaining the freshman 10: gaining an average weight of 10 pounds the first year trying to balance the anxiety, stress, and schedule of college life.” Well, the Clubhouse is very similar: our prescribed medications can add much more weight than ten pounds. The huge stress levels of learning to cope with a mental illness can be painful to accept. Likewise, the college quip: “Take a look around you now as you may not see these same people with you during the long haul.” Yes! It’s true that Club prospects do not always stay long to recover, but many factors contribute to this: primarily, budget cuts take away from our attendance. “I remember when...” is a most dangerous game to play in that we veteran members in recovery out of spirit of friendship and sharing meet with newer members and Club culture suddenly appears less in that staff and activities were reduced. This, in turn, creates a see-saw effect as the newer members painfully learn

-1-
that staff shift their workloads to cover those lost hours and less one-on-one assistance is provided for us.

I’d like to also mention transportation concerns. Because of budget cuts at Second Wind we had all we could do to get here. Our shuttle wasn’t running. Peers helping peers, but not Club staff helping in our case this time.

In addition, to increase our knowledge of community development, we hold writing workshops at our Club. This year, Club members Lisa R. and Pat M., found their beautiful voices in writing their testimony at the local library. The local library. And they testify tonight at the LOB. This speaks volumes for stretching beyond the Club walls and reaching beyond their comfort zones.

Gerry, also from Second Wind, states that I am his mentor and he serves with me on the Board of Directors for the Enfield People for People Enfield Safe Harbor Warming Center. This is community development at its best!

Also, the Board needs our help as they are a small group with a big heart and a big mission! They evaluate, review and strengthen the ability of our region to assess needs, develop plans, and advocate for strategies/resources to advance healthy and inclusive communities while enforcing mental wellness. We in recovery and others are supported and inspired in finding our voices.

Please ... let’s keep good things going by looking at the big picture of recovery: determination, struggle and progress in continuing these beneficial programs/services of CHR and the Board. Can we try to keep the reductions at minimum?

Together, we have the vision of moving forward.

I thank you for the many years of support received, the future ones, and for listening to my testimony this night.

Catherine Kriss
12b Union Street
Enfield, CT 06082
(760) 518-1131