HB 7148 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET

Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Alex Perfetto. I live and vote in Middletown, Connecticut. I am here today in opposition of the governor's proposed budget. I will specifically be speaking to the DMHAS Budget.

I am apart of River Valley Services (RVS) which is a Young Adult Services (YAS) Program for Department Of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). I have received significant support from RVS/YAS for over 6 years that has lead to an improbable recovery story.

To briefly explain the background story, I was diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder at the age of 10, and aspergers syndrome at the age of 13. I spent a majority of my childhood in and out of different hospitals, schools, and living situations. I went into DCF at the age of 15.

At 18 I ended up in River Valley Services (RVS). Their Young Adult Services (YAS) program has extensive amounts of support. Their biggest asset for young adults is what they offer to those living in the community. The elected officials/politicians are not aware of these supports and how much impact they have, and the proposal of taking away $250,000 is severely significant. I am thankful I have the opportunity to educate you all.

The staff that work for RVS help with transportation, which has always been a huge dilemma in general. I work 5 days a week, a split shift at that, see my therapist once a week and have a monthly doctors appointment. They have been able to help with this transportation for years, while doing the same for other Young Adults in the program on a daily basis.

I have had the same therapist for 6 years, and our relationship has been able to be continued because of the consistency, which is what I lacked throughout my life. This couldn't be more crucial from an overall standpoint having mental health disabilities.

I have a case manager from who has helped me with benefits that I needed for a period of time. He was able to help me obtain those, and has 14 other clients he assists as well.

I was able to see a Clinical Psychologist that was provided by YAS. She started the process of a Psych evaluation. The results were me being misdiagnosed with aspergers syndrome and they found I had PTSD. Once PTSD became my main diagnosis I received PTSD related treatment provided by RVS/YAS. It has now been over 2 years since I have been Hospitalised. This turned out to be a huge focal point of my continuous recovery.

Being apart of RVS/YAS I was able to get involved with Advocacy Unlimited, Join Rise Be, Statewide Advisory Boards, and The Keep The Promise Coalition, which has given me the opportunity to be here today and voice my story.

I now use the bus to get to work and make enough money to no longer need benefits to be financially stable, and have lived in my own apartment since I was 19. I turn 25 this year. The

YAS have helped immensely and the wide range of care I was provided has helped me get to where I am today. It is a struggle alone on a daily basis to manage symptoms and go about life on a daily basis in the world today. This testimony is not just for me. This is for for other Young Adults, adolescents transitioning out of DCF, and the future generation who may not have a voice. Yet, I am not going to give up fighting for my services and the help I have received when they have not given up fighting for me.

Thank you.

Alex Perfetto