



CONNECTICUT
LEGAL
RIGHTS
PROJECT, INC.

TESTIMONY OF KATHLEEN FLAHERTY, ESQ.
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HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 4, 2021

Concerns regarding Governor's Bill 6446, AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Kathy Flaherty and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), a statewide non-profit agency that provides legal services to low income adults with serious mental health conditions. CLRP was established in 1990 pursuant to a Consent Order that mandated that the state provide funding for CLRP to protect the civil rights of DMHAS clients who are hospitalized, as well as those clients who are living in the community.

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I testified yesterday in Appropriations Committee about how unacceptable this budget proposal is when it comes to human services. Many of the proposed cost saving measures in the governor's budget proposal puts the burden on the most vulnerable and most marginalized residents of this state, and I urge this committee to reject this bill.

People receiving state benefits – SAGA cash, Temporary Family Assistance, and state supplemental assistance for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled – are some of the poorest people in this state. Failure to give them a cost of living adjustment again – would ensure that state policy is reinforcing and exacerbating income inequities.

Imposing an asset test on Medicare Savings Program participants will result in the loss of access to health care for those no longer eligible, and more bureaucratic hoops to jump through for all program participants, likely resulting in people who are still eligible having their applications delayed. It also makes it that much more likely that applicants for other state assistance programs will have their applications delayed as more staff time is dedicated to verifying assets. At a time when more state employees will be retiring, adding to the workload of a reduced staff makes no sense. Most other state departments are looking for ways to streamline the ways in which people to interact with state government. It would be great if the Department of Social Services were able to do the same.