

**Testimony Before the Human Services Committee
March 4, 2021**

**PUBLIC HEARING RE: HB6446 AN ACT CONCERNING THE GOVERNOR'S
BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMAN SERVICES.**

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Peter Flynn

Bridgeport, CT

Hello. My name is Peter Flynn. I am a resident of Bridgeport CT, and a proud member of Bridge House for many years now. I have struggled with psychiatric problems for almost my entire life, primarily due to a bipolar disorder. I have had severe depressions, suicide attempts, hospitalizations, and more. I can have pretty severe anxiety reactions to really simple things. Fortunately, however I have been able to work successfully for many years in the nursing field as an RN. In fact, my last job prior to having to leave the field due to the worsening of my symptoms, I worked for seven years as a nurse at The Bridgeport Community Mental Health Center. My own experience with a mental illness, I felt, made me uniquely qualified to help others with a variety of chronic psychiatric illnesses, as no doubt you are all well aware of at the Bridgeport facility. I secured approval for SSDI about four years ago. Prior to that, I had to live on whatever State assistance I could qualify for in addition to limited financial assistance from my family. I would also like you to know that I have experienced homelessness. For about a year I lived in a variety of homeless shelters so I have kind of seen it all. Right now my income from SSDI is \$1,588.00 per month, or approximately \$19,056. per year.

I am explaining this all to you today because I am very worried and concerned about a policy favored by Governor Lamont that would impose an asset test on recipients of the Medicare Savings program. At this time, my health insurance coverage is a Medicare Advantage plan through United Healthcare and my secondary insurance is through the State Medicaid program. I depend on this for all my healthcare needs, not only psychiatric but medical problems as well. In fact, just last week I had to have a surgical procedure done at Bridgeport Hospital to correct an esophageal structure I had developed. This current plan has been nothing less than awesome. I really never have any doctor copays and frequently no medication copays. I really just consider myself so lucky and blessed to have this kind of healthcare, as you can see from some of my life experiences. This has been such a blessing in my life. If there was anything that would jeopardize this awesome, necessary healthcare, I would be extremely concerned about that. For that reason, I find that I just cannot support any changes being made to the Medicare Savings Program.

Number one, I really do not see why this is necessary when currently the way this has been handled has worked out very well for me and so many others like me who are dependent and rely on these valuable programs.

Number two, it seems to me this simply would create an unnecessary burden on so many people like myself that are very dependent on getting the best healthcare we can due to the chronic nature of our illness. Having been a nurse in this system and a recipient of psychiatric care, I feel that it has given me something of a unique perspective here. So, I think you can trust me when I say, in my opinion this will probably do simply more harm than good to people living with a chronic mental illness. Having worked from both sides here, I feel that the State of Connecticut has a responsibility here. If these proposed changes were to result in even one

person's loss of their necessary health benefits because they drop out of the system, that, by the way, can be extremely difficult and challenging for them to even get into in the first place, that in my opinion, would be irresponsible and a shirking of Connecticut's responsibility to me and hundreds of other citizens like me throughout the State. We are just people; we have healthcare needs through no fault of our own. Governor Lamont and Connecticut's legislative leaders just have a responsibility here. We are voters too, by the way, and should have a say in the system to the best benefit to all of us in the greater Connecticut community. My question for you to consider would be this: how, exactly, does our greater community benefit by making some of its most vulnerable members sicker and poorer?

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony and for allowing me this avenue to share my concerns on this particular portion of the Governor's proposed budget.