

January 29, 2013

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Wood and members of the committee. First I would like to say that my heart goes out to the victims of Sandyhook Elementary School.

About myself. I have had anxiety since I was very young age that was never diagnosed and/or treated. In first grade I was diagnosed with a learning disability and spent the following 11 years in Special Education and being bullied by classmates. Years later, at 14, I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety. Teachers not only told me to ignore the bullying but in addition, I was placed in lower level classes with behavior problem kids. I never had behavior issues but was eager to learn and was never allowed to reach my full potential. As a result, I was a child left behind. Teachers, college professors and other school officials told me that I could probably obtain an Associates Degree but a Bachelors degree would be much too difficult. Well, roughly 20 years after high school, I proved them all wrong and obtained a Bachelors Degree in Sociology in May of 2008.

During my years of high school and many years to follow, I have seen a variety of therapists for ongoing past and present issues and have yet to locate the right counselor. I was told that I should get a new therapist every 2 years. This is how mental health clinics have operated since the late 1990s.

I have also been a client of the Bureau of Rehabilitation since 1987 to 1999 and reopened my case in 2007. Out of the 16 years I was a client of this department they have never been able to place me in a single position that is financially suitable, appropriate to my skill set and education.

Since I was a child, I have been a child left behind and nothing has changed. I keep falling between the cracks of the system and only want to succeed just as every other American. I have exhausted all of my resources throughout the State of CT and have looked outside the state for employment.

The problem with the mental health system is that services are designated by demographic area. That has been my experience. If I went to a private doctor, Medicare only pays a small fee and I would be responsible for the rest which I cannot afford. This leaves me in a precarious situation.

My current dilemma is that my mother is about to sell her house where I currently reside and I have no place to go. My income doesn't allow me to afford an apartment and my bills and student loans use up my limited income I get from Social Security Disability. The system continues to leave people of low income with mental health issues in a difficult position.

What I have done for my recovery is continue to seek employment and appropriate counseling. I am highly functioning and have overcome many obstacles and wondering when the State of Connecticut is going to recognize that changes need to be made.