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Marc Montminy, Chief

Legislative Testimony

To: The Mental Health Subcommittee of the Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children's Safety.

Co-chairs: Senator Toni Harp and Representative Terrie Wood

Thank you for your time. My name is Karen Hanley and I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. I am the Program Director for the CHR Mobile Crisis Response Team. In the wake of the tragedy of Newtown, I would like to take the opportunity to discuss the importance of the relationship between law enforcement and the mental health profession.

I am a member of the Manchester Police Department's Crisis Intervention Team, known as CIT. CIT is a forty hour training program that provides police officers the knowledge, training, and skills to safely and effectively assist people in psychiatric crisis while connecting them to community based services.

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services funds the CT Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement to provide the CIT training in partnership with NAMI-CT.

The Manchester Police Department CIT Team meets on a monthly basis to review mental health calls, to review persons in the community who may come to the attention of the police yet may need mental health support to avoid entry into the criminal justice system, and to discuss unusual patterns or safety concerns that arise in the community.

The working collaboration between CHR and the Manchester Police Department does not end with these monthly meetings. Due to the ongoing commitment and relationship of team members, each professional is proactive and will seek out the assistance of each discipline as needed. Recently, the crisis team and police helped avert a potential workplace homicide/suicide with a gun by working closely together researching information. In addition, police officers routinely help those living in the community by making referrals for services, rather than ignoring a person's need for support.

The proactive rather than reactive nature of the CIT Team is essential in ensuring our communities are safe. I urge you all to continue your strong support and full funding for the community based mental health treatment and mobile crisis response teams, CIT and local law enforcement in order to better serve persons in psychiatric crisis by enhancing the well-being and safety of the entire community.

Good morning, I am Chief Marc Montminy of the Manchester Police Department. Over my 27 year career in law enforcement I have seen dramatic change in the public expectation of police officers. There was a time when police were simply required to arrest criminal wrongdoers and break up bar room brawls. No more... now police officers are part social work, part substance abuse counselor, and part crisis intervention specialist.

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Perhaps as an unintended consequence of reintroducing those with mental health issues into residential environments, police officers are now psychiatric first responders, a role for which they receive little or no training. When the Manchester Police Department's calls for mental health service jumped from 370 in 2005, to 883 in 2010, I knew I needed to take action. We contacted the Mobile Crisis Response Team and CABLE in order to get training for our officers. At that time, few police agencies were crisis intervention trained. The initial class was approximately 15 officers, and now over 35 Manchester Officers are CIT trained. Thanks to NAMI-CT and the other agencies that stepped up to the plate.

Manchester now boasts one of the most efficient and effective response protocols for those with mental health issues. As the tragedy in Newtown has taught us, failure to provide resources for those in crisis can cost more than any of us is willing to pay. I to urge you to support full funding for community based treatment and intervention.

Thank you for your attention...