

**Testimony before the Mental Health Subcommittee
January 29, 2013
MaryAnn Cole**

Good afternoon members of the Committee.

First, we want to thank everyone that didn't cut the budgets. We really appreciate this. I'm from the Independence Center (IC) in Waterbury CT which I call my home. I go there on a daily basis. I came in very sick; I refused to take my medication before coming to the Independence Center. We have three wellness workshops, three times a week that taught me how to accept my mental illness. I have bipolar, which I have to take medication for. I never knew how important it was, I was a handful. I used drugs to medicate myself which almost killed me. I didn't know how to take care of myself; I didn't eat for nine days at a time and didn't change my clothes. I would wash up in bathrooms; I was homeless.

The workshops that we have here are very much needed. The IC has helped me with all these issues. They help me to care for myself, help me to build up my confidence; they help me more than my family could. I'm so grateful I have so many special friends at the IC that accept me for who I am. This is my home, without this program I wouldn't have a normal life. I love the IC, we all do. I didn't trust anyone when I first came here, I was scared to death. I thought it was too late for me. I am drug free a year and now I quit smoking. The IC helps all of us, we all have different issues. I also trust all the staff and members. Thank you again for not cutting the budget.