

Testimony Before the Appropriations Committee
February 21, 2020
DMHAS BUDGET HEARING
H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE 30, 2021
Mike Wimbish

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

I didn't speak for the first five years of my life. My mother brought me to Newington Children's Hospital, and they referred her to the Institute of Living. I was with a group of other children and they helped me learn how to speak to be prepared for kindergarten at Head Start. I was able to attend regular kindergarten because of their help. My first diagnosis was ADHD and Learning Disabilities.

I had both individual and group therapies at the IOL. I attended there from 1965 to 1990. Twenty years later, I went to CHR and InterCommunity for continued therapy and to become more social with advice from my therapist.

My first job was through the Easter Seals job program in food services. After that, I worked at Stop & Shop in 1993. In 1999, I worked as a mail clerk. I was reassessed and diagnosed in 1998, and I learned that I also had autism.

For two years, I lived with and became the caregiver of my mother who is now in a nursing facility. This isolated me from everyone and everything. Once she moved, I was forced out of my mother's home and moved closer to Common Ground. I was able to get the help that I needed from my case manager to get a place of my own to be more independent. I also started to do volunteer work at Goodwill. I have gotten support from InterCommunity and Common Ground to be able to accomplish these goals. There is still a lot I need to work on with my social skills to better communicate and understand other people and accept them for who they are so that I can also be accepted when I tell people my experience and story.

I have been going to InterCommunity and Common Ground Learning Center almost daily for the past 18 months and I have learned with the help of my therapist, case managers, and staff at Common Ground, how to learn to meet new people, begin to be active in groups, go on events and trips in the community. If Common Ground- InterCommunity didn't exist, I would be homeless or in fear of losing my home. I would not have been able to go through the process of finding a new home on my own. The InterCommunity staff helped me to commit to my goals and take the challenge to move forward with them. Last December, I took the Essentials and Leadership trainings with the KTP organization so that I could find and use my voice in my community more effectively. I am grateful for the trainings as I move another step closer to a purposeful full life.

The main reason why I am writing this testimony is that I was inspired by another member's testimony. I want to be able to help others receive the services that I received so that they can lead more enriched and productive lives. I want to thank the Governor for keeping the budget in tact, however, I feel that many services were cut in the past few years, and with the increase in minimum wages, more services will be cut if non-profits have to lay off people who run them. Please increase funding for non-profits like InterCommunity so that valuable community services can be expanded and outreach to others.

Sincerely,

Michael Wimbish