

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and the distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021

My name is Debbie Carpenter, I work at Gilead Community Services, at The Valor Home. The Valor home is a supervised apartment program which houses 5 men from the ages of 36 to 69. Not only do we keep the men safe and cared for, we teach them how to keep themselves and others safe, and to make connections to Gilead and the community at large.

At the Valor house we celebrate every holiday, which includes Super Bowl Sunday, March Madness, and the occasional Walking Dead marathon. We celebrate everyone's birthday. In the summer we have weekly barbeques and invite other Gilead clients over for badminton matches. We have a large garden and use our crops for our healthy cooking class.

One year we entered a talent show. We made a paper mache car, with working headlights. Somehow I talked 10 staff and 9 clients to dress in 50's garb, learn a dance and perform Grease Lighting.

My coworker Joyce and I decided we should march in the Middletown Memorial Day parade for Gilead's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This has now become a tradition.

For the past four years we join other Gilead supporters in the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Road race. Two of the men from Valor house and myself are on the race committee.

Last year, I decided that we might need a vacation, so I booked a camping trip for the men. I overcame obstacles with staffing and food budgets and we booked four days at Camp Harkness. Staff volunteered to switch their schedules around. We had a relaxing four days at the beach. One of the men said, "This is the best vacation I ever had." This went so well, that we have booked a week of camping this coming June.

Staff at the Valor house keep the men safe, but more importantly they show the men how to enjoy life.

Year after year we come before you and ask that our programs be fully funded so we can continue serve community members who suffer with mental illness. For 13 years we have been we asked to do more with less. This is my specialty making more with less.

We are asking you to please:

1. Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2025;
2. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2021, a 7% increase;
3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

Thank you for listening, and I hope I will not have to come back next year.