

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**

Karen Healy

My name is Karen Healy, I live and vote in Hartford and I am here to share my personal testimony regarding the governor's budget.

I would like to say thanks to the Governor and the legislators for maintaining the budget this year and not adding more devastating cuts to mental health services.

I was institutionalized between Poughkeepsie, New York and Hartford, Connecticut. I spent most of my time in State Hospitals for self-injurious behavior from the 1989, until December 2014. I was put into psychiatric hospitals off and on, since about age 16 up until December 4, 2014.

State funded services are important to me because I am able to live in a community setting successfully since December of 2014, which I believe is less expensive than if I were in a psychiatric hospital.

My current level of support from Goodwill Incorporated, a residential support program, allows me to live in the community which is less costly than a state psychiatric hospital bed. I am able to live in the community and contribute to my day to day living expenses which I couldn't do if I were in a state psychiatric hospital.

I want to continue to live in the community and not return to a state psychiatric hospital that would cause the state to pay for my day to day needs. I feel like a successful person when I am able to make my own contributions. Perhaps someday I won't require state financial help. I am working hard every day to make it my dream come true. That is, to be able to meet my day to day needs completely independently.

When I moved to the community with my current level of support, people doubted me. They felt I would always be a screw up and institutionalized. However, there was a number of staff who did believe in me. It was through their efforts, as well as my family, that I was able to be discharged from CVH December 4th of 2014. During my final case conference at CVH, my mother, who at the time, was my conservator of person and estate was told to never let me have my hip surgery because it was believed that I could not handle the surgery. They expected me to be back at CVH in one or two weeks following my December 4th 2014 discharge.

It's been over 5 years since I was discharged from CVH. I have had my hip surgery. I am no longer in need of a wheelchair or walker. I now have a paid part-time job. I also volunteer at my church. I have gone through many weeks of withdrawal from the high dose of narcotics I was given while at CVH.

People should not be judged because they have a long-term psychiatric illness. Everyone deserves the chance to be treated well and have as normal a life as possible.

Thanks for listening to my testimony today.