

**Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Health Subcommittee**

**Public Hearing re: HB 5005, AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE 30, 2021**

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Good evening distinguished members of the committee.

My name is Emily and I am from North Haven. I am a recovering addict. Last year, I was part of DMHAS' LiveLoud campaign to share my story and inspire hope in others. Tonight, I encourage you to support maximum funding for programs like The Governor's Prevention Partnership that help young people. With more prevention programs like theirs, maybe other kids would have understood the impact of their words before they bullied me; maybe I would have made other choices.

My issues started back as far as I can remember. I was made fun of in elementary school for the way I looked. I hated myself from a young age and believed all the hateful, cruel words said to me. I suffered from bulimia. This was just the beginning of my addictions. I was diagnosed with depression at 15 and sent inpatient a year later. I never felt worthy enough, and every time I would get clean, I still deep down did not believe in myself. Heroin was my drug of choice since 18, and before that it was pills. Around the age of 23 I became very addicted to crack cocaine, which led me down the darkest roads of my life. When I was truly desperate for my next hit, I would sleep with my dealer for just that one more hit of crack... which it never was. I believed this would be my life until I finally died.

In January 2018, I left my parents home on foot with just the clothes I had on. My family put out a missing persons report on me, and I'm so

thankful they did. I was being held by a man who was trying to brainwash me and said he was going to sell me. Something came over me though and I started to pray. I wanted to change and I wanted help . I was ready to do the work. The guy I was with saw the alert, and let me go. God had answered my prayers. The minute I saw my mom and dad, I was so relieved yet so broken, but knew I was going to make it this time.

My clean date is January 23, 2018. I just celebrated 2 years, which I never thought was possible. I am currently working as a CNA working with the elderly and am on the Board of TriCircle, which provides resources for those struggling with addiction. I always thought I was different, and no one would ever be able to help me. It has not been an easy road, but with the love and support of my family and friends, I put in the work and had the resources to help get me through.

We need to do more for young people. We need to make sure they have places to feel safe and the support they need to stop addiction before it starts. I am here speaking to you today a very fortunate human being. Unfortunately, many do not make it, but with more programs like The Governor's Prevention Partnership, maybe they would never end up in the situation to begin with.