

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, 2020
Carlos Martinez

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Carlos Martinez, and I am registered voter in East Hartford, CT. I would like to thank the governor for not cutting the DMHAS budget this year. However, I am asking for additional funding for non-profits like InterCommunity who are struggling to help people recover from mental illness and addiction because of all the previous cuts over the past few years.

I come to InterCommunity for different services like Common Ground Learning Center, Community Support Services, Therapy and Occupational Therapy groups like video, multicultural, and meditation. Services at InterCommunity are essential to people because it helps them at different points of their recovery. When I first came here, I thought that I was going to be in trouble and many things were happening in my life, and I didn't want to be like that anymore, so I sought out the help that I needed. Today I am a recovery support specialist certified by the State of Connecticut thanks to InterCommunity and I am able to serve people every single day with advice and getting the different services that they need. However, it is becoming more difficult because of the lack of staffing. I'm concerned that the important staff might leave now that with the minimum wage increases. Many of these staff know our stories, and care about us and they may have to leave or get laid off since they have had many cuts in the past decade and haven't gotten any raises even for cost of living. I thank InterCommunity every single day that I come to Common Ground.

Because I received these services from DMHAS for Behavioral Health, I am NOW a recovery support specialist and peer support who can serve and give back to the community to help others who were in my shoes. Our community is better for having services like these for people who need a place to go and belong to, get better, and get supports to make their lives better. It's great. I respectfully request that you preserve and increase funding for DMHAS so that more people can be served by qualified staff who care about our lives.

Thanks for your time and interest.

Sincerely,

Carlos Martinez