

**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**  
**Thomas Hope**

Good evening Senator Osten, Rep Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee especially Susan Johnson and May Flexer of the Windham area.

My name is Thomas Hope and I am a registered voter in Windham.

I am here to testify regarding H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021.

Thank you for not making more cuts in the DMHAS budget this year. I will be sharing with you the things that help me in my life via experiences, the strength and hope I have found because of the programs that I am affiliated with through United Services. As a member of Lighthouse, a program offered by USI, this has been part of my support network for over 30 years. These two programs saved my life and for that I am eternally grateful. As committed as I have been to these two specific programs, they have been very committed to my health and wellbeing.

For many years I have suffered from isolation and am on psychiatric medication to help stable my personhood. My diagnosis causes paranoid anxiety when there is much stress in my life. Often times I get suspicious of people and triggered by jealousy. Today my mental health is under control because of the help I have received from USI and the teams that I have had the pleasure of working with.

My focus and attention today is on the Northeast corner of CT; they are being called the forgotten ones. It has been proven that the Northeast forgotten ones have been receiving far less monies per person in comparison to other more prominent areas of CT. This does not seem conducive or fair for those who have mental health problems. The constituents of CT are equally important regardless of which end we come from –the north or the south. I am an advocated for the Northeast and active member of Keep the Promise (KTP).

USI offers programming which includes wellness programs; in particular the Health Habits is a group that focuses on the physical and mental wellbeing.

This is just one of many opportunities that provide support to me. I personally lost 60lbs during my time with the wellness coach. More importantly, is the things I learned from the coach and other staff concerning diet, exercises, stretching, coping skills and so forth. The wellness group is a big hit with members at the Lighthouse another program that offers more opportunities to focus on positive life changing affirmations.

The Catchment Area Council SERAC when it took the place of Eastern Regional Mental Health Board (ERMHB) unfortunately was met with waves of conflict that generated many people with disgruntled attitudes concerning mental illness and how important it is that the needs of those who have mental illness gets met. I believe that it was in part due to these people complaining that improvements were made. THANK YOU for listening!

During legislative trainings I learned that stigmas are attached to people who have mental health issues. Different types of stigmas associated with violent crimes are society's way of labeling population. Well statistics prove that the crimes associated with violence in mental illness is less than 2% - 4% and the guns associated with M.I. is less than 2% with violent behaviors. The homeless folks are losing the shelter in the Windham area and they are currently looking for a new place to home this population of people many of which are community members who suffer from mental health issues. WE need more appropriations for this area. We need your help and we need your voice.

In closing, I'd like to thank Keep the Promise Coalition for its support and trainings of our legislators which has helped me and other to learn about the rights for person with mental illness. Thanks for letting me share and for the opportunity to participate in KTP for the past 5 years.

THOMAS HOPE