

Written statement of Melissa McGee

Concerning DHMAS funding

Appropriations committee

Friday 02/21/2020

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the CT DHMAS budget. I have seen the direct positive impact of the recovery support services that are funded by the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction services. I refer to that as the ripple effect. The negative impact that addiction has on people, families and our communities can also have the same positive impact. People go from hopeless to hopeful and helpless to helpful. Sometimes these changes are so gradual that they get overlooked. Everyone is effected by both the positive and negative outcomes of addiction and recovery.

Recovery Community Organizations and Community Centers play a vital role in this transformation process. The centers provide a safe, welcoming and judgement free environment. This is often the first time someone who has been battling addiction is welcomed and treated with dignity and respect. The center offers volunteer opportunities, trainings, social events and recovery support groups.

Good leaders build leaders and transformed people transform people. The funding from DMHAS allows the centers to not only survive but thrive, just like the individuals that utilize the services at the center. I wear many hats as the Volunteer Manager at the CCAR Recovery Community Center in Willimantic. I am a resource broker connecting people to services. I am a motivator and cheerleader to not only celebrate the successes but encourage people to continue in the face of adversity. To watch a person go from vulnerable to empowered is a remarkable process. I am very fortunate to have the opportunity to help facilitate this on a daily basis. The people I encounter are somebody's family members, quite possibly your own. Sustained recovery for a mother recently released from incarceration has a profound effect on her family. The same family that was torn apart can now be reunited. This is an example of the RCO's in action. This is what I refer to as the ripple effect.

My own personal experience of battling alcohol dependence for many, many years gives me a unique perspective on the challenges that exist for people who are trying to recover. I am fortunate that I have been able to sustain my own recovery for 17 years. I have become a role model for the recovery lifestyle, something that I couldn't have ever conceived of. My passion is to help others to achieve the same sense of purpose and well-being that I have experienced for many years.

Please support on going and extended funding for DHMAS so that we can continue to provide recovery support services to our communities in need.