

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

Catherine Parker

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Catherine Parker and I am a registered voter in the city of Bridgeport. Mr. Governor I first want to thank-you for not proposing cuts to the DMHAS Budget. I voted for you and I believe in you. Thank you for not letting me down.

I first became homeless at the age of fourteen. I was first diagnosed with mental illness when I was fifteen years old. I have been chronically homeless throughout my life. When I came to Bridge House twelve years ago I was homeless and living in my car. That is when I was first introduced to advocacy, Keep the Promise, and NAMI. I lived in my car in the parking lot on the side of the building and attended Bridge House six days a week. I received three hot meals a day and we had an evening program twice a week. We were also open every Saturday. With the budget cuts of 17% over the last five years our club house was forced to stop offering dinner, and evening and Saturday programs. Also, we now need to practice portion control with our meals. I do not believe that any Club House member should ever walk away still hungry.

While attending Bridge House I became employed part-time and received housing from the newly created Areyto Supportive Housing apartments a daughter program of Cosa Hostos Recovery Program directed under Asher Delerme.

Through my own choice I stopped attending Bridge House. I began to isolate and began drinking. I spent the next ten years alone and at the bottom of a bottle. I ended up in-patient for the first time in twenty-four years. After fourteen days I spent two months in Intensive Outpatient Therapy. I then returned to Bridge House. I was immediately, welcomed back and It was as if I never Left. I am currently looking for employment. I have received a new Diagnosis and new medications and I have even celebrated my six months of sobriety. All of this could have been avoided if I had only stayed involved in Bridge House.

Thank you for listening to my testimony today.