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United for Quality Care

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Jacob Degennaro, RN  
Cheshire Correctional Institute  
District 1199NE  
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Jacob Degennaro and I am a nurse at Cheshire Correctional Institute. I am proud to have worked for the department of corrections since 2017 where, on a daily basis, I am given the opportunity to provide multi-dimensional, high quality health care to one of our most at-risk populations.

I am testifying today to urge the committee to reject the \$1.3 million in cuts that the Governor has proposed to Health Care Services at DOC and instead put a significant investment into staffing and funding.

For the past year, my co-workers and I have put aside the well-being of ourselves and our loved ones at home in order to provide the care needed by our patients to remain healthy and alive. We have braved this ever-changing, relentless threat with our heads held high and our hearts on our sleeves. Unfortunately, no matter how many long, hard hours we put in, without the proper resources – including appropriate staffing numbers, up-to-date equipment, proper training – our effectiveness and efficiency is significantly limited.

If our budget is cut further, our ability to deliver quality care based on community standards and practice is a near impossible task. Instead of cutting, we need to invest in staffing and resources. Depriving nurses, doctors and mental health staff that are already at a critical level of the resources that are needed will likely push the Health Services Unit over the edge.

Speaking on a more personal level, as a registered nurse, my duties extend far beyond just the direct patient care aspect of our job. The medical and mental health staff do a lot more than just deliver health or mental health care. The transition from incarceration back out into the world is one of the most difficult times our population will face in their lives. We need more resources to give us the ability to provide the education, resources, and support that they need to succeed when they leave. We need to be put in a position to work cohesively with the direction that our criminal justice system is going – not be a hindrance.

After all that we have been through over the past year, showing us just how uncertain the world is, the one constant that continues to persevere has been people. There is no better time than now to make an investment in people. With all of the progression and change to our criminal justice system, now is the time to establish ourselves as true leaders within our country and leaders within our communities. Now is the time that our actions

can show that we are leaders. Progress does not come from following the established status quo; progress comes from leading toward a new path.

Cutting the budget is not a solution – it is simply a deferment. We are asking that you disregard the Governor's proposal and work with us to find a solution. Thank you for your time and consideration.