

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**March 2, 2021**  
**DMHAS BUDGET HEARING**  
**H.B. No. 6439 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE**  
**BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS**  
**THEREFOR.**  
**Joseph Cintia**

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee including my representative Geraldo Reyes.

My name is Joseph J. Cintia and I am a registered Independent voter from Waterbury, Connecticut. I rely on services from Mental Health Connecticut for my continuing recovery. In the past, I have been homeless and suicidal, and services from the Department of Mental Health and Mental Health Connecticut are vital to ensure my continuing mental health so I can be a good member of society and an asset to the community.

I hope you will not cut any services to mental health, especially during this dark time of the Covid-19 Virus Crisis. Many people like me have been cooped up for months without the normal supports and services which have been unavailable during this Covid-19 Virus Crisis. Mental health services are vital to maintaining the safety net that will prevent breakdowns on the individual and community levels.

In the past, in Waterbury, we have seen one social club close down and services pared down due to budget constraints. I must say that this is a bad way to try to save funds. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Thousands or millions could be saved in hospital bills, by simply fully funding the system set up to prevent hospitalizations.

We are asking the legislature for three million dollars the first year, and one and half to two million in subsequent years for the starting and continuing operation of five peer respites. We ask that five respites be allocated, one per DMHAS region, and be staffed by persons with lived experience in the mental health field and certified in Intentional Peer Support.

Also, I want to remind you of the promise that was made by the government of Connecticut when the mental hospitals were shut down, to provide community services to maintain these clients in the community and prevent hospitalizations. Please keep that promise that was made by fully funding the Department of Mental Health and non-profit agencies like Mental Health Connecticut.

Society must protect the weakest and most needy to prevent a breakdown on a personal or community level. We must realize that the disabled are not unable to be good citizens and assets to our community. They just need your support in funding the safety net they need to function well in the community and prevent the hospitalizations that cost more and help less than having a support system help them stay healthy both in mind and body.

Thank you for reading my testimony and I hope we can count on you to do the right thing at this dark time in our history.

Sincerely, Joseph J. Cintia