

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee

March 2, 2021

DMHAS Budget Hearing

H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR

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

My name is Tom Hope and I'm a voter in Windham. I'm also an active member of Keep The Promise, as well as an advocate for the mentally ill.

I am here to testify regarding H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR

I am concerned about the flat funding that is proposed for services in the DMHAS budget by the Governor. Staff who work at private, non-profits do not get raises or cost of living increases. Clients from the Northeast corner of the state have less money allocated compared to others in other areas of the state. An example of how this affects me is that I get a new therapist every year because they leave to make more money somewhere else. This means that my treatment is constantly impacted by needing to start over with someone new. I was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia in the year 1986. I have been in the hospital and was in a partial hospitalization program for 3.5 years. The constant change with my therapists at United Services, make my recovery a more difficult one. "Steady and known help" is always a good thing for those of us with mental illness.

I've received treatment over the years at United Services in Mansfield, CT. The Lighthouse Social Program has helped me to mainstream into the community. These services have provided me with professional help and quality care for years. An increase in funds can only help me more to get a firm handle on my

treatment. My family and the Lighthouse have been a positive match for me. I have had some successes over the years including 29 years clean and sober. I also, quit smoking cigarettes 13 years ago. I have lost both of my parents now. I have a vision that they are both looking over me and guiding me to make positive decisions today.

Everything is on hold right now, as I go to church 4 to 5 times a week. I participate in the Lighthouse Program 2x a week. With sober living and redirection, I am functioning fairly well. It took doing these two things to get better. Taking my medications Clozeril and Resperidal have helped me with my symptoms of paranoia and disorganized thinking. I must include the importance of therapy at United Services in my recovery journey. I have learned tools and information to keep my life independent and strong. Dealing with Covid-19 has been a challenge. Isolation has caused me physical problems such as chest pain, vertigo, and stroke like symptoms. All of my test results have come out negative. I am fine!

I am also, advocating for more independent yet supported living situations for people with mental illness that will be long term housing. I currently have my own apartment and feel that it has played an important role in my recovery.

The key issues of housing and more funding for the Northeast corner are very important to me. I hope I have been clear in this testimony from my own personal experience. I am grateful to have food and shelter during this time of Covid-19.

Thank you for hearing my testimony,

Tom Hope