

Good Evening to all and members of the Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcomes,

My name is Rachel Gibson. I am a student from the University of Connecticut School of Social Work. I am testifying in response to the proposal created pursuant to Section 9 of Public Act 09-02. With the bleak state of the current economy, now is the time to re-evaluate how state resources are being used and streamline how money should best be spent in Connecticut.

Section 13 of the proposal encourages of the general public to submit other ideas for recommendations to reduce costs to the state and enhance the quality and accessibility of state services.

One way this can be done is by re-evaluating how agencies serve the homeless population in CT.

- According to the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness, it is estimated that more than 33,000 people are homeless in the state of Connecticut over the course of the year, 13,000 of whom are children.
- The shortage in affordable housing, increase in poverty, mental illness, and substance abuse are some factors that contribute to homelessness.
- According to the Connecticut Point in time count of 2009, almost 4,366 people in CT experienced homelessness on the evening of January 3, 2008.
- **A study done by Dr. Dennis P. Culhane from Penn School of Policy and Practice found that a person experiencing chronic homelessness costs an average of at least \$40,440 in public resources each year, however, if that person were in supportive housing, it would only cost about \$40 per day or \$24,158 annually.**
- Temporary housing for the homeless and crisis services such as emergency room treatment, substance abuse, mental health care, police and court costs, can range from \$35,000 to \$150,000 per person per year.
- In contrast, giving a homeless person a permanent place to live and the support services they need to keep from ending up back on the street costs between \$13,000 and \$25,000 per person per year.

(Information taken from Springfield Mass, Ending homelessness in ten years report to the community)

It is clear that everyone loses out by not addressing this issue more responsibly. The lack of accountability and coordination of how resources are distributed continues to **manage** the problem of homelessness instead of eliminating the problem, and costs the taxpayers of CT money that could be used elsewhere.

Currently, ten year plans are being adopted and implemented in various parts of the state, with a goal of ending homelessness in those areas. (Danbury, Middlesex, New Britain, Meriden, Greater Windham, Bridgeport, Hartford).

As each part of the state addresses the issue of homelessness, it is vital that information that has been helpful in other places is shared across the state. The CT coalition to end homelessness has already done

this by coordinating a statewide study group to identify best practices and make recommendations to state government for a targeted initiative.

- According to CCEH, Westchester county NY has reduced family homelessness by 57% over the past four years.

Other places that have seen a dramatic reduction in their homeless population in the past two years are:

- Springfield Massachusetts with a 35% reduction in street homelessness, 9% reduction in overall homelessness, and
- Denver Colorado who reported an 11% reduction in overall homelessness and 36% decrease in chronic homelessness.

I applaud this committee for its efforts to enhance agency outcomes. I hope that this information is helpful and that the state will make it part of this proposal to consider how to target spending more effectively to help the effort of eliminating homelessness in Connecticut, because directly or indirectly homelessness is everyone's problem.

Thank you.