

Testimony before the State of Connecticut Judiciary Committee

November 27th, 2007

Good afternoon, Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, & esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee.

My name is Thomas Burr, from Glastonbury, CT. I am the President of the Manchester Affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, aka NAMI. I am also the Parent of an Adult Child who is in Recovery from BiPolar Disorder, after 8 years worth of repeated Hospitalizations, Incarcerations, and Homelessness. Currently he is living on his own; he is working, and doing very well.

Please note that I am speaking today not as a member of any group, but simply as a Tax Payer in the great state of CT.

I am an advocate for Supportive Housing. Recently a state of Tennessee Program showed that the providing Crisis Services and/or Incarceration cost 2-3 times more than the cost of the Supportive Housing they later implemented. They realized significant money savings by the lower utilization of Nursing Homes, Emergency Rooms, and Jails and Prisons. Supportive Housing provides for BETTER SERVICES for LESS MONEY! In other words, rather than have people who are leaving our Jails & Prisons and Hospitals left to fend for themselves on the streets, they enter Supportive Housing, which includes medical monitoring as well as other services. This scenario eliminates the “revolving door” of repeated trips to the Emergency Room and/or CT’s Jails & Prisons.

Better yet, people with a Mental Illness who have a stable home environment through Supportive Housing will be able to enter Recovery, eventually getting jobs in their community, and therefore providing tax revenue to the State. They transform themselves from being an expensive burden under the current system, and become instead an asset to the State and their community.

IN SUMMARY: I am asking the Legislature to redirect any funding targeted towards expanding our Jails/Prisons, and put it towards Supportive Housing. “Keep the Promise”, and enable people with Mental Illness to become productive members of society, keep them OUT of our Jails & Prisons, Nursing Homes and Emergency Rooms; increase their chances for Recovery, and ultimately SAVE our Taxpayers Money.

Before I take any questions, I would like to clarify something that others have previously misstated. By definition, “Mental Illness” is a diagnosable Brain Disorder: e.g. schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, depression, and is treated via medication and therapy, often leading to a full recovery. Conversely, people described as “pedophiles, arsonists, or rapists” are PREDATORS, and are NOT suffering from a Mental Illness.

Thank you. I will now gladly answer any questions you have.

Respectfully,

Thomas Burr
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