



APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

FEBRUARY 14, 2008

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

Good evening. I am Joan Pesce, Chief Executive Officer of Morris Foundation, Inc., a private, non-profit community provider of behavioral healthcare. Morris Foundation is a comprehensive behavioral health center providing addiction and mental health treatment services, case management and outreach, prevention, and support services to 3400 adults, adolescents, children, and families. Our residential services serve individuals from across the state while our outpatient services serve those in the greater Waterbury area.

Morris Foundation has contracts with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, the Department of Correction, and Court Support Services Division. We receive reimbursements from SAGA, Medicaid, including the Behavioral Health carveout for HUSKY, Medicare, and third party insurances when possible.

I am speaking to you today representing the Public Policy Committee of the Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA) to discuss the Judicial and Correction's budgets as they relate to individuals with substance use disorders and mental illness.

I am proud to provide vital addiction and mental health treatment and support services to thousands of individuals in need. Like other community providers, we provide these services in an effective and efficient manner. However, I have significant concerns about the impact of this proposed budget on our ability to continue to provide services at our current levels. In addition to nonexistent COLAs in Fiscal Year 2009, this proposal does not focus on the key areas that support the system of addiction treatment services and the vital preventive services that keep people from becoming part of the criminal justice system.

We assert that by focusing funding on vital **preventive services** like behavioral health counseling, case management and recovery support services including job training, employment and supportive

CCPA

housing, state funding can be allocated in a more meaningful and cost effective way in the community.

I'd like to comment on several positive aspects of the proposed budget:

- We are pleased to see that the budget recommends expanding Intensive In-Home Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Services (IICAPS). These services are vital to addressing behavioral health issues in children and adolescents at an early stage and involving families.
- We support expanding Re-Entry and Diversionary Programs.
- We encourage the use of Alternatives to Incarceration in CSSD, when appropriate.

We firmly believe that the state budget should focus on community-based programming that keeps individuals in need of supports from reaching the stage of incarceration. The community provider system supports a variety of rehabilitation services that help people avoid incarceration and reduce recidivism. We provide services to children and adults with mental illness, co-occurring disorders, substance use disorders and those moving in and out of the judicial and correction systems. We are testifying on multiple aspects of the budget because we firmly contend that the ideal approach to solving many of the state's "crises" is to deal with individual problems early on before those issues escalate. Investment in community-based services is an efficient and effective means of addressing the needs of many individuals that end up in higher, more expensive levels of care or other parts of the state system.

The community provider system offers solutions to many policy challenges facing Connecticut. However, chronic under funding coupled with the lack of any increase to cover our increasing cost of services, leaves community providers with only one option – to cut services to Connecticut's residents in most desperate need.

This year we are seeking a **Community Provider Rescue Fund**, which includes an immediate infusion of dollars, a Commission aimed at developing a long-term solution to our funding crisis and a fund to support our crumbling infrastructure. Please recognize the community providers as allies in dealing with major public policy issues. I urge your support of the Community Provider Rescue Fund and your attention to vital community based services in other aspects of the budget.