

Boston Health Care Systems, Inc.

To Establish a Rhythm of Life!

February 6, 2012

My name is Phyllis Wojchik and I work for Boston Health Care Systems as a Senior Administrator. While I have worked in human services for more than 30 years, the senior part of my job title is not meant to represent my age but my responsibilities at our company. Clarification is important!

I appreciate the opportunity to share this written testimony with you today.

Boston Health Care has 16 Foster Care Homes for people with severe mental illness. Our first two Foster Care homes opened in April and July of 2001 when we closed a large Board & Care home that housed 26 people. Four of those individuals went directly to the home I write about today. Eleven years later the same 4 individuals reside at this house. All were listed as "low need" and thus their budgets were cut by 10%.

Allow me to tell you about two of these individuals who are considered "low need".

Consumer #1 was not on the original list of individuals receiving a 10% cut but was later added. He has been receiving our services since 1989. Prior to receiving support he was either homeless or in a state hospital. Today he receives employment support and foster care services. He still struggles with maintaining his mental health. He is unable to identify when his symptoms interfere with daily activities and when he requires further evaluation from a psychiatrist. Observing a change in his mental health and seeking help early on has prevented hospitalizations and relapse. Support has helped him maintain employment. He suffers from brain injury and will always need support to keep him from relapsing into higher cost services.

Consumer #2 is legally blind and diagnosed with optic nerve degeneration that will eventually leave him totally blind. He is not able to be in the community without the support of staff. His challenges are connected to his physical disability as much as his mental illness.

The 10% cut to each of the individuals at this house has left the company with a difficult decision about the future of this facility. There is no overhead left to cut. The house is single-staffed 24 hours a day and the night staff are paid minimum wage to sleep. We have cut administrative positions by increasing workload. That leaves the company with few options. But to a greater extent, the company also received a 10% cut to 29 of the 64 people served. The question is now whether the future of Adult Foster Care for severe mental illness is in the long range plan for our company. The 10% cut affects all 64 individuals not just the 29 "low need" consumers identified by the assessment process.

Thank you for considering my testimony before making a very important decision that dramatically affects the entire Foster Care industry.