

September 13, 2011

**Human Services Commission  
Public Hearings on Budget Cuts Impact  
September 13, 2011  
Aurora, Illinois 60506**

Commissioners:

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to present my testimony today. I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is John Reese my address is 383 Berwick Drive, Aurora, Illinois 60506. Phone 630-897-6329.

I have been an addictions counselor for more than 40 years, currently I work at Waubonsee Community College training our next generations of counselor. I am also an active member of CORE-ILLINOIS, a grass roots citizens organization dedicated to battling the stigma of substance abuse, and ensuring that adequate treatment is available to those in need. During my years of counseling I have seen treatment grow, improve and help countless people find a recovery. Today, I would like to share with the Commission several recent events that I believe will help highlight my concern today.

First to set the stage: Funding for addiction healthcare treatment services has been slashed 38% in the past 2 years, and addiction prevention funding an astounding 64%

**Event September 9<sup>th</sup>:** September 9<sup>th</sup>. was Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders awareness day! FAS is the number 1 preventable cause of birth defects! Twice as many children are born with FAS than with Down Syndrome, but many children with FAS have an IQ in the normal range. And Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is just the tip of the iceberg. For every child with full FAS, there are 5 children with Fetal Alcohol Effects - or FAE - who may have normal intelligence and no identifying physical features, but the same degree of neurological dysfunction as children with full FAS. Together, FAS and FAE make up what we call Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders - or FASD. These children have lots of trouble in school, and it becomes more obvious around age 10 or so. They are labeled as "behavior problems" and end up abusing alcohol and other drugs, getting in trouble with the law, and generally have a hard time with life. They make the same mistakes over and over, and their behavior is misunderstood as willful misbehavior, but they really cannot help it. They want to be good, they try to be good, but they just can't. The cost in financial terms and human terms to our state are staggering! It is 100% preventable but we have slashed alcohol and drug education in Illinois

**Event September 8:** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration releases the National Survey on Drug use and Health for 2010 the summary results from this document state:

**"National Survey Shows a Rise in Illicit Drug Use From 2008 to 2010"**

The use of illicit drugs among Americans increased between 2008 and 2010, according to a national survey conducted by SAMHSA. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) shows that 22.6 million Americans age 12 or older (8.9 percent of the population) were current illicit drug users. The rate of use in 2010 was similar to the rate in 2009 (8.7 percent), but remained above the 2008 rate (8.0 percent).

Another disturbing trend is the continuing rise in the rate of current illicit drug use among young adults age 18 to 25—from 19.6 percent in 2008 to 21.2 percent in 2009 and 21.5 percent in 2010. This increase was also driven in large part by a rise in the rate of current marijuana use among this population.

“We stand at a crossroads in our Nation’s efforts to prevent substance abuse and addiction,” said SAMHSA Administrator Pamela S. Hyde, J.D. “These statistics represent real lives that are at risk from the harmful and sometimes devastating effects of illicit drug use. This Nation cannot afford to risk losing more individuals, families, and communities to illicit drugs or from other types of substance abuse instead, we must do everything we can to effectively promote prevention, treatment, and recovery programs across our country.”

**Event September 8<sup>th</sup>** Governor Quinn announced he would close down three mental health centers, two centers for people with developmental disabilities, a prison and a youth correctional camp. The folks currently in these institutions will be moved to other institutions, or sent into the community where they will receive the services they so badly need—the catch is of course where are those services now that the Human Services program budgets have been decimated?

**Event September 8<sup>th</sup>:** I visited a local treatment agency and was told we have had to stop accepting adolescents into our treatment services, unless they have private health care or the parents can self pay—we no longer have the resources to provide care to clients who cannot pay, and we cannot rely on the State anymore.

**Event Last month:** I was a guest at Sheridan Correctional Facility, a Department of Corrections facility about 20 miles from here. Today there are over 1,200 inmates receiving addiction treatment services there. These men all were incarcerated as a result of alcohol or drug addiction, the cost to Illinois of their crimes and incarceration expenses is massive. One day in the not too distant future they will be released back to the community—given today’s funding they will not be able to find adequate treatment and support their recovery and the probability of becoming a recidivist escalates and the cycle of expense continues. Many counties in Illinois have Drug Courts that are making a heroic effort to prevent incarceration and the cost associated with it, but when a person enters drug court—where will they go to get the addiction treatment they need if the State continues to slash the treatment budget?

While I understand the realities of this difficult economic period and the need for budget constraints, it is important to recognize that the budget cuts imposed on the addiction healthcare field over the last two years, on top of what was appropriated this year will actually costing the state more than it will saving by making the cuts. Gutting the addiction treatment network in Illinois will also result in the death of many who will not be able to access the addiction health care that they need.

Slashing addiction healthcare services, even in an effort to reduce the state deficit, is both counterproductive and counterintuitive. I am asking the Commission to inform the Governor and General Assembly of my deep dismay at their priority setting decisions. And to ask them, why so much is being taken from addiction healthcare services? Sick people are dying and hurting other people, while we continue to build new buildings, roads and leave other functions of government relatively uncut. Don't let this happen, we would not turn our back on a heart or cancer patient-don't let the State turn its back on the individuals and families suffering from the disease of addiction.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. H. [unclear]', written in a cursive style.