

**Written Testimony to the Behavioral Health Commission for Adult MH
Dauphin County
September 1st, 2022**

Mike Alexander
Dauphin County Community Support Program (CSP) co-chair
Eliminating Structural Racism Task Force Structure Sub-Committee Chairperson
1929 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA. 17103

Dear Commissioner Humphreys and Dr. Adair:

Thank you both and all of the Committee members for taking the time to visit Dauphin County and hear from many of its leaders and citizens.

I am a long time resident of Harrisburg. I have worked as a Night Supervisor at the Hilton Harrisburg, for 24 years and before that worked as a mental health advocate and a direct care mental health professional. I am a consumer of mental health services and a family member. I have been and continue to promote recovery oriented services across Pennsylvania. I am also currently helping to create an international thinktank to reduce or eliminate structural racism and its consequences.

Whatever recommendations you make I encourage the Commission to choose ideas that are creative, innovative, and collaborative. The suggested areas of focus must be inclusive and encourage diverse communities where everyone can thrive. Funding must be transparent and the recipients of funding must be accountable for proven results.

I would like to focus on three specific areas:

1. **Workforce development**- The broad array of human services is hurting. There are not enough college age students going into the social services and too many people are retiring or resigning. I was shocked the other day to learn that Dauphin County Children and Youth was down 34 caseworkers and 7 supervisors. The stress and increased workload of those that remain is untenable over the long term. We are short on psychiatrists especially willing to accept MA or Medicare's low reimbursements. Behavioral Health consumers need more avenues for job training, job support, and pathways for job enhancement.

2.

3. **Healthcare Disparities of BIPOC populations**- Covid shined a spotlight on the healthcare, especially Behavioral Healthcare, disparities faced by BIPOC communities every day. Behavioral Healthcare outcomes, access issues, and affordability, all are worse for people of color. Your recommendations need to enhance the recommendations made by the **Pennsylvania Covid-19 Response Task Force**:

Health Disparity: Policy Recommendation Report (July 22, 2020). In addition, a focused effort must be made to eliminate structural racism from all governmental entities, healthcare providers, businesses, and communities. I would recommend DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion) Training be required at all levels of society.

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3. Social Determinants of Health on Behavioral Health: Social Determinants of Healthcare such as poverty, hunger, lack of housing, poor education, and lack of transportation options all effect an individuals ability to access, participate in, and maintain their healthcare needs. Innovative approaches dealing with these seemingly unyielding issues is crucial and necessary.

I believe this \$100 million dollars can make a real difference in people's lives. It can act as a catalyst to promote policies and practices that will increase fair and equitable behavioral health access, treatment, and outcomes, throughout Pennsylvania.

Thank you all for your time,

Sincerely,

Mike Alexander

Dauphin County CSP Committee Co-Chair

717-695-7993 (H)

717-599-2353 (C)