

Hello Everyone,

I am writing to voice my opposition to the plans to develop more secure beds for the Middlesex facility.

I am the executive director of Alyssum, the State's first and only 100% peer run crisis respite. We have been in operation for 10 years and have a very successful and well loved program, the most frequent comment from people is "when will there be more Alyssums?"

As a state why do we continue to put more money into hospital beds, and ignore what the population DMH is supposed to be serving continue to ask for...MORE PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS? The State's 10 year "plan" includes more peer support. As a community the directors of peer support programs have put forth a plan and a budget which is outlined in the White Paper showing what might be a MUCH MORE viable alternative to more hospital beds.

Peer support is evidence based and adequate funding for peer support is desperately needed. FUNDING for more peer support would help to put a support system in place which:

- Would reduce emergency room issues by providing alternatives for people
- Would provide support and reduce the need for hospital beds
- Would provide community support and follow up, reducing crisis escalation
- Create a sustainable system for ongoing and future support and wellbeing of a vulnerable population.

I sincerely ask you to consider this. More beds will not solve anything except to house a VERY small handful of individuals at the expense of the larger populous who needs something more.

Please let's not continue to do something that doesn't work and let's move FORWARD instead of backward.

Thank you for your time

Gloria van den Berg