

16
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Madam Chair and members of the Joint Appropriations Subcommittee,

My name is Mike Kalous.

I am not going to tell much of my story in the amount of time allotted other than to say that my story is not unlike that of many of the children who come into a treatment program.

My early history was also one filled with fear, neglect, and abuse. By the time I came into a child services program I had already learned that the world was not a safe place, that adults were to be feared, and that my life was uncertain.

You can imagine that this kind of mindset is not conducive to help a child grow with a sense of safety, nor a positive sense of self. In fact, this kind of thinking is self-destructive and leads one into making many wrong choices in life; and in friends. The outcome of these life-choices may very well lead to further treatment centers, jails, or prison. Vile atrocities committed upon innocent children bring great suffering, not only to the physical body of the child, but to their very soul, the core of who they are.

Mental health providers offering healing within healthy relationships are vital in mending the soul of these broken children. A child who has been abused so deeply may believe they have no value, and deserve only the worst things of life. They will not respond to standard societal disciplinary control systems.

These deeper hurts will emerge in one form or another and manifest themselves at some point in that child's life in the most violent of ways. Without treatment these kids will emerge into adulthood with a simmering anger, untouched by the loving compassion and empathy of caring adults.

The services I received for my mental and emotional health by loving adults was just what I needed then ... and it is what all-to-many children need now. Not only have I benefited from these services but I am now giving back to my community as a counselor for seriously emotionally disturbed children. I know that sharing some of my story may help bring hope to other children who have suffered in like manner.

Sadly, the population of children who need treatment services is increasing. Many of the children we are now seeing also have increased medical and emotional needs.

Current funding levels are not sufficient to allow us to meet the needs of these children. Please allow increased funding so that we may provide the level of care required by these future teens and adults.

Thank you.