

**Testimony of Barbara Miller**

**Medicaid Rehabilitative Services Client  
Threshold Services, Inc., Silver Spring, Maryland**

**On behalf of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare**

**Regarding**

**The Administration's Regulatory Actions on Medicaid: The Effects on  
Patients, Doctors, Hospitals, and States**

**November 1, 2007**

## **TESTIMONY OF BARBARA MILLER**

Chairman Waxman, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning on behalf of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare. My name is Barbara Miller.

Today, I am on the road to recovery from a serious mental illness. I am a Program Assistant at the Hearing Loss Association of America. Before starting that job, I did a lot of volunteer work for senior citizens and people with physical disabilities. I am also deaconess in the Word of Hope Fellowship Church. At the church, I volunteer as Assistant Director for the Youth Department. There is a teenage girl in my apartment building who needs a steady, sensible adult influence, and I am trying to provide that to her as a mentor.

But my future didn't always look so bright. I was first diagnosed with bipolar mood disorder in the early 1970's. I lived at the Springfield State Hospital in Sykesville, MD for two and half years. Chairman Waxman, it was a terrible experience. The doctors there struggled to give me a proper diagnosis – and I've got to tell you the truth: it was like living in the warehouse. And that's what happened to most people with serious mental illnesses in the 1960's and 1970's: they were warehoused in state mental hospitals.

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However, with the help of treatment, rehabilitation and housing provided by Threshold Services in Montgomery County, MD, I got where I am today. When I first started participating rehabilitation services in 1990, I received Assertive Community Treatment at the group home where I lived. Staff would come out regularly to check on me, measure progress on my treatment plan, and see how I was responding medications. They also provided training to the pastor and his wife who ran the group home.

Some time ago, I moved to the Halpine Apartments. It was huge step for me because it was the first time I lived on my own in many, many years. Threshold Services provided counseling to me during the transition, and trained the apartment building managers on the needs of someone with a serious mental disorder.

Threshold Services also runs a residential rehabilitation program and off-site psychiatric rehabilitation teams, which serve a combined total of 200 people. These pre-vocational activities are important because they prepare people with serious and persistent mental disorders to participate in supported employment programs – where they work side-by-side with non-disabled individuals. Threshold also helps 35 people choose, get and keep jobs through their supported employment initiative. This is tremendously impressive because the nationwide unemployment rate among people with severe mental illnesses

exceeds 80%. Finally, Threshold has a psycho-educational day program that aims to develop community living skills, and improve interpersonal relationships.

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Mr. Chairman, I am told by the National Council that almost every service that you've heard me describe during this testimony – Assertive Community Treatment, pre-vocational services, psychiatric rehabilitation, and psycho-educational day programs – are in jeopardy because of a new rehabilitation option rule.

In addition to medication and direct mental health counseling, it's worth noting that these intensive services permit people like me to live in the community. If the federal government withdraws financing for them, many more persons with serious mental disorders will end up in emergency rooms, inpatient hospitals, nursing homes or the prison system.

I want to conclude this testimony with a simple plea: please don't send people with mental illnesses back to places like the Springfield State Hospital. We fought too hard.....and we've come too far.....to go back now.