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2020 Joint Legislative Budget Hearing Witness Testimony  
Re: Medicaid HARP (Health And Recovery Plan)

Dear Senators:

Despite mental health and physical health challenges, I earned a bachelor's degree in English from Cornell University, and a master's degree in early childhood education from the Bank Street College of Education. I have permanent New York State certification to teach grades Nursery through 6, and a permanent New York City license to teach grades PreK to 2. I taught at all levels at various points in my life, from PreK to college. The death of my mother when I was in my thirties triggered a psychotic episode and chronic serious mental illness, which ended my ability to support myself gainfully.

Therefore, I do not have the money for many things, for myself, or for my household. But **Self Direction**, a Medicaid Health and Recovery Plan (**HARP**), run by Community Access, Inc, provides me with a monthly card for transportation so I can get to my many doctors' appointments, to the supermarket, to speak to police audiences as a Crisis Intervention Team Panelist, to the art studio, etc; It got me a new refrigerator when I did not have a refrigerator for a year, thereby stopping me from falling into poorer health; It provides me the ability to get supplements that aid me in fighting off the side effects of medications, and that help me get to and stay in remission; It got me a high quality shredder to help me to continue to unclutter my living space; It got me flash drives to unclutter my computer; It got me decent leather shoes to wear for my diabetic feet; It provides me with a reliable smartphone to keep me connected to the current world; it got me art supplies so that I can continue self-employment as an artist of some fame; It got me toilet

paper when I had no money, and no toilet paper; etc. Through **Self Direction**, I have been able to reach my Wellness Goals that add to the quality of my life and my journey to recovery from mental illness. I could not have accomplished these things, were it not for **Self Direction Medicaid HARP**. ***Please continue to support and fully fund Medicaid HARP programs such as Self Direction: Helping people living with mental illnesses meet their Wellness Goals makes life better for all.***

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Laura Anne Walker