

Good afternoon Commissioners. My name is Maria Serrano. I am one of the Substance Abuse Counselors working as a County employee at the Stroger Hospital under the SBIRT program since 2009. SBIRT stands for Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment. Our role has been to screen inpatients in the hospital for Substance Abuse. We offer intervention, counseling, and referral to treatment for all addictions. We are very familiar with treatment and recovery options in all the communities of Cook County. The SBIRT program started in 2004 when General Medicine Physician Dr. Jennifer Smith saw the great need for SBIRT and wrote a grant. I worked on the SBIRT Hektoen grant since 2004. In 2009, Cook County was able to fund some of our grant positions and we became an integral part CCHHS. I am also involved in the community helping those with addiction problems (A.A). My apologies for not been able to be physically present at this meeting due to today is a school night.

It has recently come to our attention that our SBIRT services are proposed to be eliminated, saving \$480,000.00. My main concern is not as much for me being laid off, it is a more personal and ethical matter. There are funded grant positions, right now, posted for Recovery Coach but it seem that it targets the opiate epidemic that our society is facing. Are we forgetting the rest of our people that are suffering from other addictions? I guess my question is what is going to happen to those Latinos/ Afro Americans that are suffering from alcohol addiction? The population that are suffering from cocaine addiction, PCP, Crystal Meth, etc.? How come suddenly they are not important?. So far SBIRT has been an approach reaching out to all and addressing all addictions in our community. We have to be part of the solution not the problem. Our society is a combination of all of us, therefore we have to continue addressing the whole not just a partial problem. It was vaguely stated from CCHHS that Substance Use Disorder screenings will be picked up by others already providing different screenings. Our inpatient Social Workers are very understaffed and overworked. Why eliminate five veteran substance abuse counselors who reflect the majority of communities we serve? We who have walked the walk. Why can't we work side by side? Thanks to my Union for the great job in supporting us.

I am happy to be contacted by any of our Cook County Commissioners. I may be reached at (312) 259-1615. Thank you.