



The Connection

Community-based Services, Advocacy
and Research for Connecticut

February 26, 2019

Good afternoon chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is John Lawlor and I am the Director of Homeless Youth/Young Adult Programs at The Connection, a statewide non-profit human services agency that serves our state's homeless young people. I submit this written testimony in support of preserving the very modest Homeless Youth line item funding in the Governor's proposed budget.

Funding in this line item, which is administered as a successful joint collaboration between the Dept of Housing and the Dept of Children & Families, provides homeless young people throughout our state with critical services such as intensive case management services, outreach, emergency housing (shelter), and short-term rental assistance that allows youth to quickly exit homelessness and become self-sufficient.

To put the importance of this funding into context, while almost all other homeless populations in our state are on the decline, the most recent count of homeless young people in our state conducted in 2018 shows a projection of over 5,000 homeless and unstably housed unaccompanied youth age 24 and under in our communities (*Connecticut Counts – Annual Point In Time Count and Youth Count, May 2018*); the third consecutive year that our state has shown an increase in youth homelessness. In our state, homeless youth traditionally avoid accessing standard “adult” shelters and housing options, which are designed around the needs of a much older population and not for the unique developmental needs of homeless young adults. These are youth who, every night, struggle to find a reliable place to stay. Some are the homeless youth that you might be able to see; either sleeping outside, or in a car, or in a building hallway, or in an abandoned building that you drive by. Others, you might not be able to see; engaging in survival sex just to have a roof over the head, being trafficked, staying in places where they are subjected to severe physical and emotion abuse...all for the sake of having a place to stay. Longitudinal data from HMIS (the Homeless Management Information System) has shown us that without intervention, these homeless young adults are destined to become the chronically homeless adults of tomorrow; incurring sizable financial costs to various state and federal systems along the way.

Through the continued service and housing interventions funded in the Homeless Youth line item, we have seen youth achieve remarkable results in our programs; with 90% of our youth being employed and 95% of youth exiting our programs discharging to safe, stable, permanent living arrangements. Of youth that have discharged from the program since its inception in 2011, less than 3% have returned to homelessness. Last year, we were able to provide safe housing and services to



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over 140 youth through this funding. Despite the number of homeless young people that we served, there are still over 300 unstably housed and homeless youth on our waitlist (in addition to the 200+ homeless youth waiting for housing services through the homeless coordinated entry system). Preserving the funding in the Homeless Youth line item in the state budget is essential to our state being able to end youth homelessness by 2020; the current state goal.

Thank you again for your time and for your continued support in ending youth homelessness in CT. Ameliorating youth homelessness in our state is one of the most sound decisions, both socially and financially, that we as a state can make.

Respectfully submitted by,

John T Lawlor
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The Connection, Inc.