

**Appropriations Hearing**  
**Department of Housing**  
**February 11, 2020**

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to send testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in CT.

My name is Matt Morgan and I am the Executive Director of Journey Home. Journey Home serves as a backbone agency to coordinate the efforts to end homelessness and the systems of homeless services and housing in the Capitol region, known as the Coordinated Access Networks. I am advocating today for the approximately two thousand five hundred people who experience homelessness in Greater Hartford and Greater New Britain every year. Journey Home's daily interactions with executive leadership, middle management, and front-line staff at our partner agencies that provide emergency shelter, homeless outreach, and housing gives us a unique view that allows us to help identify gaps in our system and implement solutions.

The only way that big complex social problems like homelessness can be solved is the coordinated efforts of multiple partners at every level local, state, and federal, all working towards the same goal, and prioritizing time and resources towards that goal. 211 receives close to 400 calls per week from people who are having a housing crisis in the Greater Hartford region, and there are approximately 500 people in emergency shelter beds, in warming centers, and sleeping outside in Greater Hartford on any given day. Unfortunately, we only have about 7 openings per week on average in all of the housing programs in the Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network. Despite this massive gap in resources, we have been able to make great progress towards our goals of ending veteran and chronic homelessness, and with new federal resources awarded to help us with youth homelessness, we have cut the average amount of time that youth experience homelessness by two-thirds in the Capitol region from 182 days on average to 67 days on average. However, the overall homeless population still remains large and the current level of resources do not allow us to meet the needs of the majority of the individual men and women experiencing homelessness.

Any cuts to these critically important line items for housing will reverse our progress on ending chronic homelessness because more people will become chronic, and will only exacerbate the overall problem of homelessness in the community. Without this funding, we will not be able to provide these individuals with the supports and services they need to get housed and stay housed. It could also mean increases in people sleeping in the streets, under bridges, and in the woods. When people move from the streets and shelters into permanent housing, we are saving the State and our taxpayers money. The emergency departments, inpatient facilities, detox, intensive rehab,

intermediate rehab, recovery programs, jails, and legal costs are incredibly expensive services, and far more expensive than housing.

I am also advocating to:

- Maintain vital homeless system resources for youth, individuals and families. This includes funding the Department of Housing's Housing/Homeless Services line at \$85.8 million, and the Homeless Youth line at \$2.3 million.
- While the Governor's mid-term budget adjustments protect and preserve the Department of Housing's Housing/Homelessness Services line and Homeless Youth line, the following additional investments are necessary in making homelessness rare, brief and one time by 2023.
- Create a stable funding stream for the Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) 2-1-1 by providing \$2.3 million annually to the Department of Housing's Housing/Homeless Services line.
- A targeted investment of \$1.47 million in the Department of Housing's Housing/Homeless Services will enhance our state's capacity to quickly resolve episodes of homelessness for individuals and youth requiring shelter through the use of flexible funds for diversion and rapid exit.
- Add \$1 million each for rental assistance and services to provide stable housing and services for highly vulnerable people experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

Please preserve the budget line items on Housing and Homeless Services and Homeless youth at DOH so that we can keep making sure that people's experience of homelessness and all the upheaval and trauma that it causes is as brief as it possibly can be, and so that we can continue serving this vulnerable population in our community.