



Kimberlee Pita  
Board Chair

Luis B. Pérez, LCSW  
President & CEO

February 19, 2020

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee regarding:

**H.B. 5005: AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021**  
**Budget Hearing for: DCF, DSS, DADS**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Luis Perez and I wish to share comments in regards to H.B. 5005: An Act Adjusting the State Budget for The Biennium Ending June 30, 2021.

As President and CEO of Mental Health Connecticut (MHC), a 112-year-old nonprofit, and a board member of The Alliance: The Voice of Community Nonprofits, I am here to express my concern on proposed budget cuts, and to explain how funding for essential community services, across the system of care, will impact thousands of Connecticut residents.

As you gather insight and data today to make critical decisions on the budgets for DCF, DSS, DADS, please know that as discretionary funding, these departments are not fixed costs in the budget and are continually at risk.

As Connecticut continues to be siloed in its funding, please consider that MHC works within a complex system of care. One of the most debilitating consequences of funding cuts, is that when some of our fellow nonprofits face budget challenges it impacts our ability to do our best work. If other nonprofit agencies are subject to funding cuts, it creates an inability for all of us to work together to support our staff, recipients, and families. The result is that people pay by forfeiting an improved quality of life, and sometimes their life, especially if they are at risk of experiencing homelessness, not receiving care, or many of other vulnerable situations that any of us can find ourselves in.

As you have heard or will hear over the coming weeks from many employees, program participants, and advocates (from judicial to housing and education to developmental disabilities), we are respectfully requesting that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits.



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Community nonprofits are the third largest industry in Connecticut, yet the most underfunded. Since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased costs and demand for services over the last thirteen years.

We join our counterparts in all community-based nonprofits to ask that Connecticut legislators and administration:

- Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2025;
- Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2021, a 7% increase;
- Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

Continued erosion of the system of care will continue to cost us – in lives and dollars. I am asking that you join us and other nonprofits across CT to fight for funding community-based services. And, also I urge you to support proposals to shift more expensive state-operated programs into the community.

As you know from the countless testimonies from people who receive services, community-based programs work. They cost less. They improve the quality of life for thousands of residents, their families, and communities across our state.

Please ensure that community-based services are funded so that MHC and all of our nonprofit counterparts can continue this important work.

Thank you for your time and for your service,

Luis B. Pérez, LCSW  
President and CEO