

**Testimony of Jane Latus  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
February 21, 2020**

**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget**

**H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING  
JUNE 30, 2021**

Good evening Senators Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Jane Latus, and I am also a member of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Connecticut Chapter. NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all those affected by mental health conditions. NAMI Connecticut, and its local affiliates provide support groups, educational programs, and advocacy for individuals, families, and children impacted by mental health conditions.

My sister lost her life to depression, and she was one of the "lucky" ones, who had access to care. I know many people, including a family friend – a young man in New Haven – who is right now struggling to survive and to avoid homelessness – whose ONLY hope is state-funded assistance for mental health issues brought on by a childhood of neglect and abuse for which he is entirely blameless.

I understand the state's continuing fiscal challenges and the difficult decisions facing legislators and I appreciate that the Governor has flat-funded and not significantly cut the DMHAS budget. At the same time, certain state services and supports must be prioritized because of the increasing needs for services and the greater health care and human costs resulting from short-term funding cuts. I am asking you to consider increasing the funding for DMHAS behavioral health services, for related housing supports, and for services for high-need individuals in the DHMAS' budget.

**I support the following items in the Governor's budget proposal:**

- The additional \$280,880 for private nonprofit providers to reflect the impact of minimum wage increases on their costs.
- The Housing Supports/Services maintained at \$23 million for FY 21.
- The \$3 million dollars in new funding to fund community placements for individuals at Connecticut Valley Hospital who are ready for discharge. This funding would support twenty placements during fiscal year 2021. The funding would cover both rental subsidies and funding for wraparound services and supports.
- The Young Adults Services that are maintained at levels of the enacted budget, \$78 million in FY 21.
- The maintaining of the Managed Service System, (Federal) Grants for Substance Abuse Services, and (Federal) Grants for Mental Health Services line items; that all help fund NAMI Connecticut's work. work at NAMI Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,  
Jane Latus  
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