



**SEIU Healthcare**  
United for Quality Care

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SEIU District 1199 New England  
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Vikiana Alonso and I am a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at the Connecticut Mental Health Center's Hispanic Clinic in New Haven. I have worked at this location for the last year and a half, and I love that I am able to give my patients a voice.

The Hispanic Clinic of the Connecticut Mental Health Center (CMHC) is a collaborative endeavor of the Yale University Department of Psychiatry and the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). It was established in 1973, and serves the mental health and addiction needs of the monolingual Latino community of the greater New Haven area.

Staff like me are bilingual/bicultural and representative of the diversity of the Latino cultures. We provide services through the following treatment programs: triage, outpatient services, the Ambulatory Specific Adjunctive Program (ASAP), and specialty groups (alcohol, domestic violence and co-occurring disorders). Clinicians also facilitate referrals to community resources, including vocational agencies, health care providers, consumer initiatives, and educational, rehabilitation, and prevention programs.

The services we provide are important because providing services to our Latino population is important, and it brings a sense of pride to my job. I enjoy seeing our clients thrive in a familiar and safe environment when they are seen and treated as a "whole person" and not simply a "non-english speaking person" seeking services.

Unfortunately these days, we are still completely short staffed. There aren't enough case managers, so I end up not being able to get my clinical work done because I have so much case management work to do. Eventually, everything catches up with us. Without additional support, being understaffed and managing a disproportionately large caseload drastically decreases the quality of care for each client we serve. It has also taken a major toll on service providers, which eventually leads to burnout, low morale and increased absences.

Latinos make up more than 1/3 of the population and needs access to services. In order to give the care we need, we also need more Spanish speakers, and more staff that are bilingual. Without this, we are creating a language access issue.

Please support funding for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. We need more staffing and resources to be able to give the care we so desperately need for the populations we care for. Thank you.