

**Testimony of Allison Perkins
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 Allison Perkins and I am also a member of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Southeastern CT. 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 daughter Rebecca was diagnosed with SMI 10/2016 while attending SUNY Maritime.

It has been a wild roller coaster ride since then. We, as family and friends of Rebecca, had to learn about mental illness and navigating the mental illness system since then whether we wanted to or not.

Nothing can be as heartbreaking as finding out someone you love is not going to have the assumed milestones in their life like many family and friends have. Because of the diagnosis of a mental condition as opposed to a medical condition it makes it all the harder by adding stigma to this.

Rebecca ended up being part of the ACT Team of SMHA in Norwich CT after a suicide attempt September 2019.

The team has been very on top of her since then. The professionalism from the mobile outreach team, the ACT team, the doctor, the visiting nurse, case worker and her therapist has been impressive. As one of the employees told me, "we like our job, we get paid well and you are paying our salary" as a CT Taxpayer. They have got to know my daughter and I know they care about her wellbeing.

I feel less stress and relieved because Rebecca being part of SMHA. They arrange to pick her up for her appointments, I don't have the worry of whether she will make it to the appointments or not.

Her visiting nurses have been great too. They help Rebecca plan ahead and make sure she gets her much needed medication.

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 at NAMI Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Allison W Perkins