



NAMI
National Alliance on Mental Illness

Connecticut

February 21, 2020

**Testimony of Louise Pyers, M.S.
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 Louise Pyers, the Criminal Justice Project Director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). 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 role at NAMI Connecticut involves promoting and supporting partnerships between DMHAS-funded Mobile Crisis services and the police departments in their catchment areas. This is an integral part of the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program funded by DMHAS. CIT only works well when police can have immediate access, in person or telephonically to the Mobile Crisis Team that serves their area. Connecting individuals to mental health services in a timely fashion is the key to the success of CIT. Unfortunately, the mobile crisis teams are grossly underfunded in some regions of the state. One region has only 1 clinician to serve 25 towns.

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.

It makes fiscal sense to frontload behavioral health services to identify and support the recovery of individuals with behavioral health conditions instead of dealing with the aftermath of homelessness, incarceration and repeated calls for services. DMHAS has a formula that works provided that they have adequate funding.

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.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Louise C. Pyers, M.S.
Newington