

**Testimony of Christina Smith**  
**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 Christina Smith, and I am also a member of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Manchester. 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 37-year-old daughter /trans man has mental illness since brain damage at birth. I am 70 years old, my husband is 76. My trans child has been living with us all his life. Despite receiving frequent psychiatric and psychologic services, he has many issues with anger and he turns it on us; he is violent and destructive. He really needs to separate from us and be on his own with supportive housing.

The funding for supportive housing is inadequate, as currently only the homeless are being helped. President Trump plans to slash the budget further.

The environment in our home is becoming increasingly dangerous as my son is becoming increasingly more violent. My husband and I are too old for this. Being on his own is when he will grow, when he realizes that he has to deal with life and not take things out on his parents and attribute all difficulties in his life to his parents. Separating from us will be the only way for that to happen. But the support needs to be there with the housing.

The only other place for this adult child would be jail or permanent psychiatric facility which would make his mental illness worse.

Though disabled due to mental illness, he has the potential to live a productive life – he contributes in various ways to his church and volunteers when he is able. But the anger at home and the resulting violence cannot be sustained.

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,

Christina Smith

Glastonbury