



257 Lawrence Street, Hartford CT 06106 | P (860) 721-7876 | [www.cceh.org](http://www.cceh.org)

Good evening distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

Start:

My name is Dana Kras, I am currently a community organizing student studying at Uconn School of Social work. 2 years ago I graduated with my Bachelors in Social work with a minor in Social Justice. During that time I worked for Catholic Charities in Springfield Massachusetts, as a case manager. Specifically my job included helping those experiencing homelessness by providing rapid rehousing and diversion case management services. I decided to pursue my masters in community organizing because of how dissatisfied I was with my work. When I found out I was going to be interning at Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness it felt as though I had come full circle.

I have lived in New Haven my whole life and knew Connecticut is a leader in the nation in efforts and solutions that address our homelessness condition. Not only have I had the privilege of working in the Advocacy Department, but I've also been able to work closely with our Outreach/ Unsheltered Homelessness Department. Throughout this year the outreach department and I have conducted meetings with outreach specialists across the state. These outreach support specialists are crucial to our homelessness response efforts, because they identify those experiencing homelessness that we would otherwise not be aware of. We know our Investments are working as numbers show those experiencing homelessness are going down year after year. Connecticut to date has seen a 66% reduction in chronic homelessness since 2016. This couldn't have been made possible without our outreach support specialists, who are able to canvass areas where it is most likely people who are homeless who do not want to seek shelter (due to past trauma, mental health, substance abuse or other issues) stay. They are able to be found and identified and receive housing supports and other case management services that otherwise wouldn't be brought to them without outreach support.

In closing, homelessness is an unacceptable condition for any Connecticut resident, and an expensive public policy problem. At CCEH we are working with 2-1-1 and our state partners, to build a statewide framework to identify, engage, and offering supports to those who face additional barriers to access.

Now we're urging you to support:

- Enhanced outreach services by investing \$375,000 at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' Housing Supports and Services line. This would enable us to better identify individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This capacity is extremely limited at present, leaving people outside vulnerable to severe and unsafe conditions.

Investments in frontline homeless services, supportive housing, and support services will save public resources and help families and individuals transition to housing, stability, and hope. Thank you for hearing my testimony and thank you for your continuous support efforts in ending homelessness.