

Appropriations Budget Hearing on Governor's proposed Mid-Term Budget Adjustments for FY2021

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Friday, February 21st, 2020

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to support efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

As you know, Connecticut continues to be a leader in the nation in efforts to address the important and expensive problem of homelessness.

Investment in proven solutions are necessary, and those investments are working: numbers of those experiencing homelessness are going down year after year. Connecticut has seen a 66% reduction in chronic homelessness since 2016.

2016 was the year my brother Ed was housed after 25 years of homelessness.

Like many homeless people, Ed's transition into homelessness began with a series of traumas, starting in the late 80s. As Ed's older sister and co-conservator, I've witnessed first hand the positive impact housing supports have had on my little brother.

After 25 years of homelessness, my brother spent 7 months in two hospitals. He was diagnosed with schizophrenia. After a short stay in Danbury Hospital, Ed was moved to Connecticut Valley Hospital. For the three and a half months he lived at CVH, I witnessed the biggest transformations in my brother. Offered to participate in programs, Ed starting saying yes-to everything. Yes to yoga; yes to meditation; yes to on-campus movie night; and yes to frequent day passes with me. We'd use our time together to hike into the woods, reconnecting to each other and to nature. My brother has a special relationship with trees. While homeless, his street name was 'Tree Man,' as he was often seen caring, tending and talking with trees.

Because I witnessed the positive impact the staff and programs at CVH were for my brother, I support the expansion of \$3 million in funding for community placements for individuals at Connecticut Valley Hospital to support those who are ready for discharge back into their communities.

It was while Ed was at CVH that we were introduced to a representative from DHMAS. She was instrumental in finding Ed a group home in downtown Danbury. That amazing connection is why I support the enacted budget for DMHAS Housing Supports and Services line at \$23 million. I support a new investment of \$1 million at DMHAS Housing Supports and Services to pair

support services with the rental assistance and improve housing stability, income and employment, health and wellness issues, and enhance connections to community resources.

CVH and DMHAS staff and programs played a critical role in my brother's recovery and healing. Once prescribed medications, they worked to help him build social muscle for re-entering the community.

Ed is now reconnected to family and friends, has learned how to kayak with me and my son, got his passport so he can visit his nephew, my son, at college in Montreal, and, for the past two and a half years, Ed has worked full-time at a popular Danbury restaurant. Ed's life is full, healthy, balanced, and robust, just like Ed is!

Providing enhanced outreach services at \$375,000 at DMHAS Housing Supports and Services line would enable us – and I say “us” because this is a complex issue that requires the whole village to take part. It's a heavy lift and all hands, hearts and brains are needed. This would enable us to better identify individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. This is extremely limited at present, leaving people outside and vulnerable to severe and unsafe conditions.

Housing is a human right.

And housing, stability and hope are what saved my brother Ed. I urge you to support the proposed investments in frontline homeless services, supportive housing, and support services that save public resources and help families like mine, and individuals, like Ed.

Thank you for hearing my testimony and thank you for your support to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Laura Noe

Branford, CT

Sister and co-conservator of Ed Noe

