

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Aloise Buckley, I reside and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House in Torrington CT.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

I am respectfully requesting that the legislature commit to reestablishing funding to the original amount set before last year's cuts. An even better situation would be to increase the budget by an appropriate amount for new funding for community nonprofits in fiscal year 2021. The index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep up with the pace of increasing costs and help us keep valuable staff by maintaining competitive in wages.

In 2000, I was in NYC where I was floundering and I was mentally ill. A cousin of mine lived in Lakeville CT and had heard about Prime Time House and suggested that I come to Torrington CT for the services Prime Time House offered. I was glad that I had this opportunity, to receive the services that I needed. I moved to Torrington from NYC to become a member. This has been a wonderful experience for me and I am so glad I made the move. I have been writing for the prime scribe for the past years, which is an amazing coping mechanism and outlet for me. I have made best friends through Prime Time, such as Sherrie, Willow, Tim, Eva and Zak. These friends will be forever important to me. The budget for Prime Time should be increased because it is a non-profit organization and it is unique. There are limited resources for those who have a mental illness. There is still a stigma attached to those who have a mental health diagnosis. A social worker that stigmatized my mental health diagnosis once approached me. Prime time is a zone that is safe from this stigma and the staff respects you.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Aloise Buckley

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Anna Bitelow. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I think Prime Time house is beneficial to the community. Prime Time helps with education, meal preparation and transportation. Transportation is the most important aspect for me, as I cannot provide it for myself. If we were to experience a budget cut we may lose this resource. Having a budget increase would ensure that we are able to do more things and learn more skills on site. We Learn computer skills and reception skills. We also work side by side with career services and ensure we find a suitable job for a member. The staff needs an increase in the budget to ensure that they can properly help the member's needs.

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Thank you,

Anna Bitelow

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Arthur Orr. A resident and registered voter in Winsted, Connecticut. I am a full time member of Prime Time House in Torrington CT.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO FURTHER CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I have spent most of my life in the mental health system in CT, and finally with a good therapist and Prime Time House for support I am able to see measureable progress. People like me need and can use all the help we can get in order to be steadily established to the community as a more productive citizen.

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Thank you,

Arthur Orr

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Clara Halfpenny. I reside and vote in Winsted, Connecticut. I have been a member of Prime Time Club House for the past two years.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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If I did not have Prime Time House in my life right now, there would be times where I would not be able to afford a healthy well-cooked meal due to my low income. Prime Time offers a safe place for me to socialize with people who have similar mental health journeys. I enjoy working with staff members who encourage me and help build employment opportunities. If a budget cut were to be made, it could result in losing any one of the staff members that I view as a mentor. These staff members help me get through the toughest days. Without an increase in the budget, we could see a decline in the attending members, which could decrease the motivation to participate in the resources that the clubhouse has to offer.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Clara Halfpenny

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is David Dodson; I reside and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a member of Prime Time House in Torrington CT.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I would love to see our budget remain the same and not experience budget cuts, because the services we receive here at Prime Time House is very important to us. The activities we do in and out of house help me socialize and participate more within the community. If Prime Time House were to experience budget cuts, we may lose these activities along with staff members. These cuts also may discourage members from coming to Prime Time House and participating. Experiencing a budget increase could extend the hours available at Prime Time making it easier for members and myself to participate in the work order day.

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Thank you,

David Dodson

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Dory Miville. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I have been a long time member of Prime Time House, approximately 11 years. It has helped me navigate my depression, helps me to get re-motivated not once but every time I fall off the motivation wagon. Here I am a part of something bigger than myself, I work on transportation, reaching out to members, and the day to day running of most areas of the clubhouse. I am also currently serving as a member board member. I have learned so much since coming to Prime Time House that I wouldn't have learned any other way.

The ways that Prime Time House helps me maintain my mental wellness seem too numerous to list. I just know that without this program I would not be able to sustain my recovery process and be a contributing member to my family. I have hospitalizations now, but they would be much more in number if I did not have the day to day stability of my clubhouse.

Thank you, I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Sincerely,

Dory Miville

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Elaine Elwood. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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Prime Time House is a great place to come. They have helped me with many different issues that I have faced, including help with food, housing paperwork, and learn skills that I did not have before. I have made many friends here; I seem to make new friends every day! If Prime Time House was not able to stay open, I would probably be isolating myself and not have anyone to talk to or anywhere to go.

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Thank you,

Elaine Elwood

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Frank Kane. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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For me Prime Time House is a valuable resource where I can get what I need. Direction and socialization with other people living with similar struggles. I get support, a community, healthy living alternatives and inspiration to effectively deal with my behavior issues. Prime Time House helps keep me on track and empowers me to learn all that I can in keeping myself on track. Cuts to funding would extremely change the ability of Prime Time House to effectively provide these benefits not only to myself but to the countless others who depend on the programs and resources that are offered. They are a vital resource for many who struggle with behavioral issues due to living with mental illness. Any money "saved" here, would undoubtedly show up in other areas in an ineffective and a more costly manner.

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Thank you,

Frank Kane



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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Greg Gillespie. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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Prime Time House is a place where I come to shelter me in a time of need. I found them at a time when I was lost and severely depressed. I came here and they helped me with food, a meaningful place to come, a community to become a part of and work on acceptance. Peers who not only understand me but are going through their own recoveries too. Prime Time and other non-profits that I am involved with in the community saved my life, and helped me build a new life. A life that to fulfill my needs and dreams for the future. I am no longer living day to day helpless, I have somewhere to turn to and go that helps be build an intentional future. I no longer see re-incarceration in my future.

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Thank you,

Greg Gillespie

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is James Brice. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member for Prime Time House in Torrington.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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For me Prime Time House in a sanctuary, because before Prime Time I was homeless and living on the streets. I was an alcoholic and overall in a tough situation. Prime Time house has helped me maintain my sobriety through the support of the staff members and other members within the clubhouse. If it was not for the clubhouse, I would have nowhere else to go and it might lead me back down the path to alcohol. If Prime Time House were to see a rise in the budget, we could possibly get longer hours, which could encourage more enrollment within the clubhouse. It would also allow us the opportunity to receive more staffing which would only give me more support in my time here.

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Thank you,

James Brice

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is James Castagna. I live and vote in Falls Village, Connecticut.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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Prime Time House is important to me because it supports individuals who have come out of the hospital or are in the community and need a safe place to go where they will not be judged. Prime Time House provides a place for them to participate in structured activities that are important to everyday living and an opportunity to contribute to something greater than themselves. Prime Time House has been very meaningful to me because of the friendships and the connections that I have made here.

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Thank you,

James Castagna

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Jennifer McLellan. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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Prime Time is literally my family now, I have lost both parents early thanks to mental illness. I have been a member of Prime Time House for 26 years, as were both my parents. Prime Time supported us all. Specifically it has helped me grow to the point of being able to work out in the community, to take classes in becoming a better advocate for myself and others. This helps me balance my life by finding and accessing the resources I need to continue live independently and build my self-esteem. If it were not for Prime Time and other non-profit resources I am sure I would probably still be living in supported housing with a higher level of care rather than growing into my fullest life, participating in Special Olympics, and working at my job.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Jennifer McLellan

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Martha Woodward. I reside and vote in Lime Rock, Connecticut.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO FURTHER CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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I have been a member of Prime Time House for over a year, I have noticed the difference it makes when a staff member is not here. If they were to cut another staff member, I would not be receiving the same amount of attention I have been receiving in the past year. Wednesdays when we have our Wellness program, which is a meal at dinnertime and a program for promoting wellness and health. On these days, a staff member does not come in until 11:00 AM, and this program may have to be cut if we do not receive more funding or experience more budget cuts. If there are more cuts to the budget, we also may lose our Saturday activities because these events have not been as well attended recently.

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Thank you,

Martha Woodward

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Sherry Schlicher. I live in Torrington Connecticut.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

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Since coming to Prime Time I have been able to work on my anxiety and depression through working with this community on both my goals and things that matter to the running of the clubhouse. I have been able to access stable housing with help from staff, supplement my food situation, build both my self-esteem and sense of self-worth, and now I am working towards employment so that I can become more self-sustaining and stand on my own two feet. With out Prime Time House and other non-profits in the area, I honestly don't know where I would be today.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Sherry Schlicher

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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Steven Gibbons. I live and vote in Winsted, Connecticut.

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I come to Prime Time House because it was recommended that for my own personal recovery and growth I needed to stop isolating at home. Before that, I didn't know places like this existed. Since coming to Prime Time I have become a part of a larger community where I feel safe and wanted, I cannot tell you what those two things means to a person in my situation. I have applied for and earned my pharmacy technician certificate, I am currently employed in a Transitional Employment through the clubhouse helping me rebuild my ability to work independently in the community. If I had not found the clubhouse when I did, I believe I might be dead. My suicidal thoughts were at an all time high, and the plans were getting more detailed and real to me. Prime Time has literally helped me to save my life.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Steven Gibbons

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My name is Theresa Beshara. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut.

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I have been a member with Prime Time House for over 20 years. In that time Prime Time has given me a kind of shelter and a feeling of safety within a community in which to stabilize and grow. There are precious few places where stigma does not negatively impact the daily experience of someone living with mental illness. Prime Time House is a place that protects me and others from this devastating blow to self-worth. I have learned a lot about working with others to build things that are bigger than just me, this is just not available for many. To be a valued and viable part of something outside yourself is such a core piece of recovery and sustained living with mental illness.

Over the years I have grown in my individual skills of being a part of a team at times as an employee and at other times as a member needing to pull on the supports and resources that are made available through Prime Time. If Prime Time had not been here, I am sure I would have had another nervous breakdown or possibly more. These require extended hospitalization times and a lot of resources to get me back on track and living independently in the community. I can't believe that would be more cost effective than just having my recovery supported in the day to day manner that Prime Time allows me to do.

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Thank you,

Theresa Beshara



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Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Willow Dealy. I Reside and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I have been a member of Prime Time House for the past 30 years.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

I am respectfully requesting that the legislature commit to reestablishing funding to the original amount set before last year's cuts. An even better situation would be to increase the budget by an appropriate amount for new funding for community nonprofits in fiscal year 2021. The index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep up with the pace of increasing costs and help us keep valuable staff by maintaining competitive in wages.

Like many people who suffer from chronic mental illness, my family is alienated from me. I do not have their support, I am unable to work and life is very hard. Prime Time House has been a refuge for me, giving me a place to come, a place where I can volunteer and contribute to something larger than myself. A place to be with others who understand, these places are rare. Without Prime Time House I would probably be dead. I have seen the impact of inflation on our budget, I have seen staff go and not be replaced, hours cut. And all the while more and more people are needing these services. The opioid epidemic continues to mushroom, the emergency room crisis center is packed beyond capacity, crime rises and the situation or all citizens becomes worse and worse because places like my club house need funding that they are not getting.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Willow Dealy

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Adam Lytton, Program Manager at Prime Time House in Torrington CT. I am a concerned mental health provider, taxpayer, and a citizen of Connecticut.

Whenever I hear another DMHAS public budget hearing is scheduled, I worry for my members (clients) we serve and the staff who we employ at Prime Time House. The mere topic about another DMHAS budget hearing sends a ripple of anxiety and paranoia throughout the non-profit services system in Litchfield County.

I have some simple questions that needs some serious answers.

1. Why the most vulnerable and voiceless are constantly the first population targeted whenever budget hearings arise?
2. DMHAS mission statement states; **“The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is a health care agency whose mission is to promote the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral health needs through an integrated network of holistic, comprehensive, effective, and efficient services and supports that foster dignity, respect, and self-sufficiency in those we serve”**. How does DMHAS services promote the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral needs, when the thought of closures or cuts creates anxiety, depression, and uncertainty to most clients in Litchfield County?
3. When will DMHAS take a stand with our membership against social injustices and inequalities?
4. Local non-profit mental health providers assist people living with a mental illness manage their lives. We work side-by-side our member’s every day and work on socialization skills, employment opportunities, lease compliance for housing, and offering our membership a better quality of life. By working side-by-side our membership, evidence have shown decreases in hospitalizations stays, homelessness, and legal cases. Evidence have also shown increases in employment and education opportunities that supports a better quality of life for our membership.

I am writing this letter in support of the membership at Prime Time House and the other local mental health providers and clients we collaborate with throughout Litchfield County. We must stop looking at the voiceless and most vulnerable to change the state deficit. Whenever the voiceless and most vulnerable become pawns in the politic game of financial restructuring, the effects are long lasting. When will state leadership, lawmakers, and department heads have the courage to do the right thing by the people? Why are we only important during election time? What is missing from this equation is equality. Equality is a GOD giving right that cannot be broken, taken, or taken advantage. Reflecting back to the DMHAS mission statement, when words such as comprehensive, effective, dignity, supports, and respect are used to describe services that are offered to people in recovery, I can't figure out why those words don't ring true all the time. The words that are missing from the mission statement that best describe my members are perseverance, drive and determination, compassion, and advocates for others. I stand with my membership proudly in the fight to protect their rights for comprehensive services!

Thank you,

Adam Lytton

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Danielle Miliard, a program counselor at Prime Time House Clubhouse, a psychosocial rehabilitation program that serves individuals in Catchmen Area 22 or the 26 towns in the northwest corner of Connecticut. Prime Time House serves individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness, who are eighteen and older; find pathways to independence through employment, education, and socialization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021,

Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving people in need and employing tens of thousands. They are what make Connecticut a great place to live and work.

I am here to respectfully **request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits**. Since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased costs and demand for services over the last thirteen years. Please:

1. Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2025;
2. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2021, a 7% increase;
3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

Thank you

Danielle Miliard

Prime Time House

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Frank Morrell, I am Program Counselor at Prime Time House Clubhouse, a psychosocial rehabilitation program that serves individuals in Catchmen Area 22 or the 26 towns in the northwest corner of Connecticut. Prime Time House serves individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness, who are eighteen and older; find pathways to independence through employment, education, and socialization.

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3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

I have worked at Prime Time House for almost five years. During my time here, I have witnessed the growth and development of countless individuals who are impacted by mental health issues as well as individuals diagnosed with mental health and substance abuse issues. However, due to budget cuts in the past I have watched a rise in individuals needing services here in the northwest corner who are under-served and vulnerable to hospitalizations or incarceration.

Cuts in funds has also resulted in Prime Time House having to cut their transportation service for those that need access to these services to get to medical appointments, educational opportunities, community resources and other necessary appointments to live. Prime Time House has also seen a

decrease in our food bank supplies and food items in which many members count on. Delivery of food has gone from weekly to bi-weekly.

Prime Time House continues to serve our most vulnerable population in the northwest corner and we battle new problems daily. The fact that services continue to be cut for qualified non-profits is unbelievable.

A similar issue is that there have not been increases in wages for employees of non-profits in quite some time. With the increases in minimum wages, we desperately need to pay qualified, education people in the field of Human Services more money so we can keep them employed with our agencies. The staff turnover at Prime Time House and other non-profits only increases burnout rates for other staff, increases anxiety and angst for people in recovery and costs these businesses money in re-training and hiring new staff.

In closing, please consider this information when making decisions that affect the constituents of Connecticut. We need to ensure our most vulnerable population's needs are being met daily and can only do so by increasing state grants for qualified non-profits such as Prime Time House.

Thank You,

Frank Morrell, Program Counselor  
Prime Time House

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Karen Fenn. I work for Prime Time House. We work with adults with mental illness who would like to be in the workforce. We serve the Torrington area.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2021.

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3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

I have been working as an employment specialist for 4.5 years. In that time, I have seen many fellow employees leave due to low salary, and time after time they have all told me that they would stay in a heartbeat if the pay was higher. We all love the work we do, but the pay is sadly not commensurate with the work we do or rising living expenses.

Furthermore, going through the process of looking for new employment specialists so many times takes a toll on our agency. The clients we have build a rapport with us and then have to go through the loss of our leaving. It is hard for them to want to continue in our program when they know they have to start over with a new employment specialist and share their (sometimes traumatic) story again. We also lose time by having to go through the interview process so many times that it takes away from time staff could be spending on our normal job tasks. We also have to spend more time training new employees.

We also are in need of electronic health records, which would save so much time, not to mention paper. It would also be more efficient. We have to be in the community 65% of our work week and having to remember to bring papers with us can be cumbersome and if we forget to bring a document, we are unable to easily print. Electronic health records would eliminate these issues.

I believe the work we do is so important. Getting people back into the workforce serves so many great purposes for multiple parties. The client is making more money to support themselves, they have an activity to do during the day that will help keep their mental health symptoms at bay because they are happy to be working. They are also contributing taxes to the government. Without programs like ours, our would-be clients would not be able to easily get into the workforce since many of them have little to no computer skills and many applications are online these days. We also offer job support and advocacy for those who are working, to help them with any issues that might arise at work, instead of the client just quitting or getting fired. I love the work I do, but with more funds, we can do even more.

Sincerely,  
Karen Fenn, Senior Employment Specialist  
Prime Time House



**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Lacey Grogan, a Program Counselor at Prime Time House Clubhouse, a psychosocial rehabilitation program that serves individuals in Catchment Area 22, or the 26 towns in the northwest corner of Connecticut. Prime Time House serves individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness, who are eighteen and older; find pathways to independence through employment, education, and socialization.

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I am here to respectfully **request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits**. Since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased costs and demand for services over the last thirteen years. Please:

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3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

Here at Prime Time House, we serve a vast population of vulnerable and under-served individuals. As an agency, we serve over 400 members annually. This number will only continue to rise as the opioid crisis rages on in the state of Connecticut, and as services for individuals with mental health issues continue to be cut. This agency experienced a 5% decrease to its budget in 2017, which we could not afford. It meant the end for certain services that used to be provided, including transportation services to and from necessary appointments. At the very least, we cannot afford any more cuts.

I have worked at Prime Time House since August of 2018. Though I have only been working here for a short amount of time compared to some of the members and other staff, it did not take long before I realized just how vital the services that non-profits like this provide. On average, individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness or addiction have a life span that is 25 years shorter than those that do not. As evidence of that, I have attended more celebrations of life for members that have passed away in the last year and a half than I would like to admit. As a state and as human beings, it is our

responsibility to lift up the individuals who need us the most. Cutting the budget for non-profits such as Prime Time House would be counterproductive for that mission. Increasing or restoring the budget would allow us to help more people more effectively.

This place is so much more than just a job to me. I was a recent college graduate when I began working here, with little experience working in this field. However, I have become part of a community that throws itself into supporting its members with everything that it has. Working here is incredibly rewarding, as I have experienced mental health issues within my family, and within my own life. It means the world to me to be able to come here and make a difference. With that being said, I am currently pursuing a graduate degree. What that means for me in part is that my student loans are in deferment. When I graduate, and I have to start paying that money back, I will not be able to live off of the salary I currently make. Please note that I am not advocating for an increase in the budget so that I can make more money; no one who works in this field does it for the money. However, keeping and retaining educated staff can only be done if the organization can afford to pay them a wage that reflects the cost of living and the cost of getting an education.

I urge you to take this information into account when making budgetary decisions that impact ALL of the citizens of Connecticut.

Respectfully,

Lacey Grogan, Program Counselor  
Prime Time House

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Linda Bellmar, Program Coordinator of Prime Time House Clubhouse, a psychosocial rehabilitation program that serves individuals in the Catchmen Area 22 or the 26 towns in the northwest corner of Connecticut. Prime Time House serves individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness, who are eighteen and older; find pathways to independence through employment, education, and socialization.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021,

Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving people in need and employing tens of thousands. They are what make Connecticut a great place to live and work.

I am here to respectfully **request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits**. Since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased costs and demand for services over the last thirteen years. Please:

1. Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2025;
2. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2021, a 7% increase;
3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

I have been employed with Prime Time House Clubhouse for approximately six years. During my time here, I have worked with individuals impacted by significant mental health and/or substance abuse issues, helping them get back to work or school and to become contributing members of their community.

During this time, I have also witnessed continual cuts to our budget. In 2017, Prime Time House received a 5% cut to a program that was already under-funded. We need to ensure our most vulnerable population's needs are being met. We can only do so by increasing state funding for qualified non-profit agencies such as Prime Time House.

Respectfully,

Linda Bellmar, Program Coordinator  
Prime Time House

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Sherrie Perugini, and I am proud to be staff at Prime Time House Clubhouse, a psychosocial rehabilitation program that makes a difference in people's lives. We serve individuals in 26 towns in NW Connecticut, or what's known as Catchment Area 22. We work with adult individuals living with severe and persistent mental illness. Our goal is to help them thrive as they find pathways to independence through employment, education, and socialization.

First, thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021,

Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving people in need and employing tens of thousands. They are what make Connecticut a great place to live, to work and to grow.

I am here to respectfully **request that the legislature please appropriate \$461 million over the next five years for community nonprofits**. Since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased costs and demand for services over the last thirteen years. Please:

1. Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2025;
2. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2021, a 7% increase;
3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

For almost 7 years I have been working here at Prime Time House. I have witnessed struggles, growth, setbacks, and the blossoming of many who come through our doors. These individuals who are living with mental health issues as well as individuals diagnosed with mental health and substance abuse issues. However, due to budget cuts we have watched a rise in individuals needing services here in the quiet corner of CT who are under-served and vulnerable to hospitalizations or incarceration (both of which we all know cost much more than the supports and services which often circumvent them).

In 2017, Prime Time House received a 5% cut to a program that was already under-funded. This resulted in Prime Time House having to cut their transportation service that was utilized for over 300 rides in a three-month period. This left people no longer able to access this service to get to medical appointments, educational opportunities, community resources and other necessary appointments to live a healthier more productive life. This was a huge loss as transportation is very limited in our area.

This budget cut also greatly impacted our food service budget, which is vital to the Clubhouse as we serve lunch daily and sometimes this is the only hot meal our membership eats for the day. Lastly, these budget cuts greatly affected those we serve, as Prime Time House continually serves over 400 individuals' yearly meaning there are more members with the same amount of staff.

Prime Time House continues to serve our most vulnerable population and with the opioid epidemic spreading here in the northwest corner, we are combatting new problems daily. Since Fiscal Year 2013, grant funding for substance abuse services has been cut by 29%. From 2013 to 2017, opioid-related overdose deaths increased from 417 in 2013 to a record high 1,200 in 2019. These numbers are astonishing! The fact that services continue to be cut for qualified non-profits is unbelievable. How can we as a state say we are battling this epidemic appropriately when we continue to cut funds and create barriers to accessing services?

A similar issue is that there have not been increases in wages for employees of non-profits in quite some time. As someone, who is actively pursuing a graduate-level degree and working in the field for a little under ten years I strongly and respectfully encourage you to reconsider this. With the increases in minimum wages, we desperately need to pay qualified, educated people in the field of Human Services more money so we can keep them employed within our agencies. The staff turnover at Prime Time House and other non-profits only increases burnout rates for other staff, increases anxiety and angst for people in recovery and costs these businesses money in re-training and hiring new staff. It is heartbreaking when a co-worker comes to tell you that they are leaving and they are in tears as they say: "I have never left a job that I loved doing, and people that I love working with before... I just can't afford to work here anymore". This says a lot.

In closing, I ask again. Please consider all of this information when making decisions that affect the constituents of Connecticut. We need to ensure our most vulnerable population's needs are being met daily rather than ending up in costly ER visits, hospital stays, or incarcerations. We can only do so by increasing state grants for qualified non-profits such as Prime Time House. We also need to increase funding for these services in order to pay our staff livable wages so we can keep professional, educated people in the field. I appreciate your time, and the ability to share whats on my mind and heart regarding this subject.

Respectfully,

Sherrie Perugini

Dedicated Staff Advocate @

Prime Time House

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Stacy L. Asklar, I am an Employment Specialist at Prime Time House in Torrington CT. Prime Time House serves individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness find pathways to independence through employment, education, and socialization.

I am writing in regards to the DMHAs budget meeting and the concerns I have in my role as an Employment Specialist. I've been employed by Prime Time House in Torrington, CT since October in this role and hope to be able to continue as an Employment Specialist.

One concern is that the rate of pay is significantly lower than other agencies that have Job Developer/Employment Specialist positions. Honestly, I am not sure I will be able to remain in this position for years due to this reason. Even with budgeting, I'm finding it difficult to pay all of my bills and still have a comfortable left over in my checkbook.

This leads to the next concern which is that of paying for employees to get trained and having such a high turnover. It doesn't make sense to hire someone, then train them, give them a low pay just to have them not remain in their position for the long term. Ultimately, this defeats the purpose of even sending people to training and DMHAS losing money.

Consistency is missing in this field which can lead to unresponsive clients, especially if given a previous employee's caseload. The client may think, "why bother talking to this new person when they probably won't stay either?" I can speak personally on this because when I started at PTH I acquired someone's caseload and I haven't heard from half of them.

In closing, I feel that these are all valid reasons to consider surrounding the new budget. If we are expected to provide quality services to clients then employees also need to be treated as valuable and steps should be taken to retain these employees. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Stacy L. Asklar, MA  
Employment Specialist  
Prime Time House  
836 Main Street, Torrington, CT

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Zachary Ritchie, the Program Manager of Prime Time House Clubhouse, a psychosocial rehabilitation program that serves individuals in Catchmen Area 22 or the 26 towns in the northwest corner of Connecticut. Prime Time House serves individuals diagnosed with severe and persistent mental illness, who are eighteen and older; find pathways to independence through employment, education, and socialization.

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3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

I have worked at Prime Time House for almost ten years. During my time here, I have witnessed the growth and development of countless individuals who are impacted by mental health issues as well as individuals diagnosed with mental health and substance abuse issues. However, due to budget cuts in the past I have watched a rise in individuals needing services here in the northwest corner who are under-served and vulnerable to hospitalizations or incarceration.

In 2017, Prime Time House received a 5% cut to a program that was already under-funded. This resulted in Prime Time House having to cut their transportation service that was utilized for over 300 rides in a three-month period. This left people no longer able to access this service to get to medical

appointments, educational opportunities, community resources and other necessary appointments to live a healthier more productive life. This budget cut also greatly impacted our food service budget, which is vital to the Clubhouse as we serve lunch daily and sometimes this is the only hot meal our membership eats for the day. Lastly, these budget cuts greatly affected those we serve, as Prime Time House continually serves over 400 individuals' yearly meaning there are more members with the same amount of staff.

Prime Time House continues to serve our most vulnerable population and with the opioid epidemic spreading here in the northwest corner, we are combatting new problems daily. Since Fiscal Year 2013, grant funding for substance abuse services has been cut by 29%. From 2013 to 2017, opioid-related overdose deaths increased from 417 in 2013 to a record high 1,200 in 2019. These numbers are astonishing and affect me personally, as I have watched my own family battle with opiate addiction. The fact that services continue to be cut for qualified non-profits is unbelievable. How can we as a state say we are battling this epidemic appropriately when we continue to cut funds and create barriers to accessing services?

A similar issue is that there have not been increases in wages for employees of non-profits in quite some time. As someone, who is actively pursuing a graduate-level degree and working in the field for a little under ten years I strongly and respectfully encourage you to reconsider this. With the increases in minimum wages, we desperately need to pay qualified, educated people in the field of Human Services more money so we can keep them employed within our agencies. The staff turnover at Prime Time House and other non-profits only increases burnout rates for other staff, increases anxiety and angst for people in recovery and costs these businesses money in re-training and hiring new staff.

In closing, please consider this information when making decisions that affect the constituents of Connecticut. We need to ensure our most vulnerable population's needs are being met daily and can only do so by increasing state grants for qualified non-profits such as Prime Time House. We also need to increase funding for these services in order to pay our staff livable wages so we can keep professional, educated people in the field. I appreciate your time on this matter and hope you will remember these sentiments when making your decision.

Respectfully,

Zachary Ritchie,  
Program Manager  
Prime Time House



**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Donald Keesler Sr. I live in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

I am respectfully requesting that the legislature commit to reestablishing funding to the original amount set before last year's cuts. An even better situation would be to increase the budget by an appropriate amount for new funding for community nonprofits in fiscal year 2021. The index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep up with the pace of increasing costs and help us keep valuable staff by maintaining competitive in wages.

Prime Time House has been a wonderful experience. I have only been here since October 2019 but in that short time I have found a community that helps me by being a healthy destination to come to every day. I enjoy the interactions with other members and the staff. I immediately noticed how comfortable the members were in this environment. People talk about not knowing where they would go if Prime Time wasn't here, it's a safe place for all. It's a great place for me to learn ways of dealing with my bi-polar and its symptoms and I am not stigmatized here, I am accepted exactly as I am because everyone is somewhere on their own journey of recovery, that alone is worth its weight in gold. I have value here, I can give back and be an integral part of everything Prime Time is and does for its community.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Thank you,

Donald Keesler

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 20, 2021**  
**February 21, 2020**

Senator Osten, Representative Toni Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and respective members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Daryl Chandler. I live and vote in Torrington, Connecticut. I am a current member of Prime Time House.

I am here today to address and testify in support of NO CUTS as put forth in the Governor's proposed budget H.B 5005. Specifically the DMHAS budget, which directly effects the budget of Prime Time House, a social rehabilitation program here in Torrington that I am a member of. I encourage the Appropriations Committee to look at the impact that the cuts have made over the past decade, and to restore the original budget prior to the cuts we have experienced.

I am respectfully requesting that the legislature commit to reestablishing funding to the original amount set before last year's cuts. An even better situation would be to increase the budget by an appropriate amount for new funding for community nonprofits in fiscal year 2021. The index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep up with the pace of increasing costs and help us keep valuable staff by maintaining competitive in wages.

With no full time job out of here I need Prime Time House to survive. Prime Time House, also helps to keep my mental illness in check. I have friends here and I enjoy participating in the daily activities offered. I also need Prime Time House, to have access to the Transitional Employment opportunities because I am not able to work totally independently in the community.

I appreciate the time you are giving to consider our request, as I hope that our budget will be restored to the fullest amount.

Sincerely,

Daryl Chandler