

Testimony Before the Appropriations Committee
February 21, 2020
DMHAS BUDGET HEARING
H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021
WILLIAM ACOSTA

Good evening Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is William Acosta and I am a registered voter in the City of Bridgeport.

I am here to testify regarding **H.B. No. 5005, *An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021***. I am a staff member at Bridge House in Bridgeport. My title is Housing and Advocacy Coordinator. Bridge House is a psychiatric rehabilitation day *Clubhouse* program founded in 1986 for adults 18 and over who are experiencing chronic, lifelong mental health conditions. Bridge House empowers its consumers—or “members,” as our community is addressed in the Clubhouse world—to improve their lives and realize their potential. Since its inception, Bridge House has served thousands of members and we continue to provide a critical and safe haven for adults in the Greater Bridgeport Area and Fairfield County.

But I’m not here to detail those particular kinds of specifics because the data is captured by others—not me—who are accountable for ensuring that the success of these vital programs are properly captured and reported.

I’m here to reflect on the *amazing* transformation that I have personally seen in the lives of the members. I have shared in the past before this Committee that two of my own children are living with mental health conditions; one of them is a member

at Bridge House. I can tell you with *no* embarrassment and *no* shame, that the critical role that this program has played in improving the life of my son has been indescribable. He is no longer homeless, he has worked, he has gone to school, he is not in a hospital—and although we are continuing to work with him to help him improve the quality of his life, how far he has come has been heartwarming beyond description. I am impassioned all the more to give as much as I humanly can to be a part of the improvement of the lives of *all* the members of Bridge House, because I believe wholeheartedly in its mission and purpose.

Thank you for recognizing that mental health outpatient services—which includes the life-changing contributions of day rehabilitation Clubhouse programs, the partnership between consumers and providers that the Catchment Area Councils constitute in the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations—and so much more.

Thank you for your service to the citizens of Connecticut and for your openness to listen to our stories. Thank you!