

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**February 21, 2020**  
**H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE**  
**BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021**

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Rita Allard and I am a long-time resident of Southeastern Connecticut, and a person in recovery since October of 2015.

I am here to offer testimony regarding H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2021.

I stand before you today in support and to preserve the proposed DMHAS funding for substance abuse and mental health services—especially those allocated for nonprofit organizations.

Four and a half years ago, I lost everything including my freedom and nearly my life due to a crippling opioid addiction spanning over a decade. Upon reentering society, I faced many challenges. Perception Programs, CCAR, ABH, and Reliance Health were my saving grace and helped me get my life back. In October 2019, I joined the Reliance Health family as the Recovery Coordinator for Penobscot Place, a recovery-based program serving individuals with co-occurring substance use disorders and mental illness. I am now able to see firsthand how vital state funded services for non-profits are and the impact they have on not only the individuals utilizing the services but the community as well. I firmly believe that any previous and/or future funding reductions would be detrimental to the level-of-care we are able to provide to our members.

Since 2014, nonprofits have endured a 17% reduction in fund allocation during a very difficult time in the state. This reduction has dramatically impacted our state which has been rocked by the opioid epidemic. I believe that by taking into consideration the impact of previous reductions in funding, and reviewing the proposals prepared by the Alliance regarding the level of investment needed to not only restore funding from previous cuts but also restore and improve the services so desperately needed in our community (and statewide), we will be able to sustain, maintain, and improve the services offered by nonprofits. Without the services and support I received I wouldn't be standing before you today... I would have been another statistic—not a success story.

Thank you Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee for your time today and allowing me to express my support for H.B No. 5005.