

**Testimony of Thomas Burr  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
February 21, 2020**

**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) budget**

**H.B. No. 5005 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING  
JUNE 30, 2021**

Good evening Senators Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Thomas Burr, from Glastonbury CT, and I am on the Public Policy Staff of the Connecticut Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Connecticut, aka NAMI CT). However, for the purposes of today's hearing I am only speaking on behalf of myself. NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for all those affected by mental health conditions. NAMI Connecticut, and its local affiliates provide support groups, educational programs, and advocacy for individuals, families, and children impacted by mental health conditions.

I am the parent of an adult child who is in recovery from bipolar disorder, after 8 years' worth of repeated hospitalizations, incarcerations, and homelessness. Some of the best care he received during his illness occurred right here in Hartford, at the Capital Region Mental Health Center. These were services provided by DMHAS and funded by the State of CT via Husky. My son is now in recovery, living on his own in a condo he purchased himself, working full time; and has been doing very well for the past 14 years!

I understand the state's continuing fiscal challenges and the difficult decisions facing legislators and I appreciate that the Governor has flat-funded and not significantly cut the DMHAS budget. At the same time, certain state services and supports must be prioritized because of the increasing needs for services and the greater health care and human costs resulting from short-term funding cuts. I am asking you to consider increasing the funding for DMHAS behavioral health services, for related housing supports, and for services for high-need individuals in the DHMAS' budget.

**I support the following items in the Governor's budget proposal:**

- The additional \$280,880 for private nonprofit providers to reflect the impact of minimum wage increases on their costs.
- The Housing Supports/Services maintained at \$23 million for FY 21.
- The \$3 million dollars in new funding to fund community placements for individuals at Connecticut Valley Hospital who are ready for discharge. This funding would support twenty placements during fiscal year 2021. The funding would cover both rental subsidies and funding for wraparound services and supports.
- The Young Adults Services that are maintained at levels of the enacted budget, \$78 million in FY 21.
- The maintaining of the Managed Service System, (Federal) Grants for Substance Abuse Services, and (Federal) Grants for Mental Health Services line items; that all help fund the work at NAMI Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and attention. I will now gladly answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Thomas Burr  
Glastonbury, CT