



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM E. DELPHIN-RITTMON,
Ph.D.

Testimony of Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D., Commissioner
Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services
To the Appropriations Committee
March 26, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and I appreciate the opportunity to testify on House Bill 5742 AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF COVID-19 RELIEF FUNDS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, MENTAL HEALTH, SUICIDE PREVENTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICE PROVIDERS.

DMHAS is a health care service agency whose mission is to promote the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral health needs, with a focus on mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and promotion of recovery. For the past year DMHAS has been fully committed to ensuring the safety of the behavioral health community during the COVID-19 pandemic while continuing to provide quality treatment services across the continuum of care. In FY20 the agency served over 105,000 persons at risk for or experiencing a serious mental health or substance use condition.

DMHAS' general fund budget has been augmented over the course of the pandemic budget by federal funds including monies from the CARES Act, Coronavirus Relief Fund. DMHAS has passed these dollars onto the behavioral health system of care, which is a public/private partnership delivering a wide ranges of inpatient, outpatient and recovery support services through our state-operated facilities and contracts with over 165 non-profit community-based agencies statewide. The federal dollars have also supported safe service delivery at Connecticut Valley Hospital and Whiting Forensic Hospital.

Federal dollars targeting the safe delivery of services have provided crisis intervention services, mental health and substance use disorder treatment and other related recovery supports for adults impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. CRF funding was used to assist nonprofit providers with the significant demands that have been placed on them as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. This financial assistance was provided to support additional staff costs related to the pandemic, the purchase and distribution of PPE, assistance with testing, as well as funding to meet other challenges of COVID-19. A comprehensive list that provides detail on the funding is attached at the end of this testimony.

In the past month the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) has authorized an additional \$420,000 to help alleviate strain and respond to areas of immediate need. These additional resources will expand

diversion options for those suffering from mental illness who might otherwise enter the criminal justice system and support the Department of Correction in their efforts to decompress and close prisons. A portion of the dollars will also be provided to the ACTION/ United Way hotline to hire more staff to decrease call wait times.

DMHAS anticipates additional federal funding from the recently passed American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. DMHAS is working collaboratively with the OPM to identify the best use of these funds so detail is not currently available. The detail, once determined, will be included in a spending plan to be presented for approval by the Connecticut General Assembly in accordance with Public Act 21-1.

The DMHAS budget, with the influx of federal funds, is adequately resourced to provide funding to the entities named in this bill. House Bill 5742, while generous, is not necessary in light of current and planned federal dollars. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony. If you need additional information please contact Mary Kate Mason, DMHAS Director of Government Affairs at mary.mason@ct.gov.

PROJECT TITLE/BRIEF SUMMARY	Amount Awarded FFY 20	Amount Awarded FFY 21	How Much Paid Out through 1/7/21	Services
SID 29561 Coronavirus Relief Fund- Coronavirus Relief funds from OPM to DMHAS for the COVID-19 pandemic.	\$15,594,364	\$0	\$15,183,365	Nonprofit Provider Payments, 60 West, State Operated Facility costs such as equipment, PPE, and temporary housing for state employees and contracted screeners. Balance will be used for on-going temporary housing.
NEW SID 29561 Coronavirus Relief Fund- Coronavirus Relief funds from OPM to DMHAS for the COVID-19 pandemic.		\$420,000	\$0	Nonprofit Provider Services
SID 29569 Connecticut COVID Behavioral Health Response and Assistance (COBHRA) - To provide crisis intervention services, mental health and substance use disorder treatment and other related recovery supports for children and adults impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.	\$2,000,000	\$2,859,649	\$1,154,419	State wide Mobile Crisis Enhancement , Telehealth for Inmates, Enhanced EAP Services and Supports for Medical Professionals, Family Based Recovery, 2-1-1 Enhanced funding , Intimate Partner Violence campaign.
SID 29594 Connecticut Crisis Counseling Immediate Response Program (ISP)-Federal Crisis Counseling grant funds to address the behavioral health and social support needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.	\$704,038	\$0	\$480,361	Immediate Crisis Counseling Reimbursement for Crisis Counseling Services, staff , training, travel and other expenses during COVID 19.
SID 29614 Connecticut COVID-19 Assistance for Community Health (COACH) Regular Services Program (RSP) - Crisis Counseling Program to address the behavioral health and social support needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.	\$0	\$3,080,526	\$297,101	Crisis Counseling Staff, Training, Travel, and Other expenses
	\$18,298,402	\$6,360,175	\$17,115,247	