



Governor's Proposed Budget FY2021-23
Appropriations Hearing
HB 6439 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023
Department of Housing
Friday, February 19th, 2021

Testimony of NAMI Connecticut, Inc.
1030 New Britain Ave, Suite 201
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By Thomas Burr
NAMI CT Community & Affiliate Relations Manager

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Gibson, Senator Hartley, Representative Kennedy, Senator Somers, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for reading my testimony today on House Bill 6439 (AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023). I am writing to highlight the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

As a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut and NAMI CT's Community & Affiliate Relations Manager, we, alongside many other partners in the state, know that safe, affordable, and permanent housing is the only solution to homelessness. When our state's residents have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve. During COVID-19, the need for permanent housing for all of Connecticut's residents has become even more important.

I respectfully request that the committee support the following proposals from the Governor's budget for the Department of Housing (DOH):

- We support funding for the DOH Housing and Homelessness Line Item at \$85.5 million.
- The Governor's budget proposes cutting \$3M from this line reflecting lapses for specific programs. We request that those funds be repurposed for the Rental Assistance Program and/or homeless services.
- We are also in support funding for the DOH Homeless Youth Line Item at \$2.65M in FY 22 and \$2.94M in FY 23.

We also support the following additional investments through the DOH:

- We support the addition of \$2.3M in specific funding for Coordinated Access Networks (CANs) to a new line item called 'Homeless Supports' at the DOH.



- Lastly, we support an additional investment of \$2M in DOH's Housing/Homeless Services Line to provide rental assistance to 200 scattered-site supportive housing units.

I can speak with person experience that my own son was at one point working on his recovery from a serious mental health condition, which at different times resulted in him being homeless. It was heartbreaking for me as a parent to see him with no place to go. We as a compassionate state must and can do better! Thankfully, he is now in a stable, 14-year long recovery, and is doing quite well. He has been working steadily during this time, has a wife, a child and home, and is a both a taxpayer and a voter.

Since 2012, the number of people utilizing Connecticut's shelter system has decreased by 57%. Investing in proven solutions to homelessness is necessary in continuing our progress and ensuring that every youth, family, and individual has a safe, stable place to call home.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work making important and life-saving decisions during this public health crisis – it is with your support that we can help make sure Connecticut's residents are healthy and stably housed.

Sincerely,

Thomas Burr
Community & Affiliate Relations Manager
NAMI Connecticut, Inc.