

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

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Gibson, Senator Hartley, Representative Kennedy, Senator Somers, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Kellyann Day and I am the CEO of New Reach, an organization that is working to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. New Reach provides eviction prevention services, crisis services including emergency shelters and housing. Last year our organization alone served close to 4000 men, women and children in New Haven and Fairfield Counties. All of which were either unstably housed or homeless. COVID has increased the need for our services and the pressure on our systems. For example, the length of stay at our shelters steadily climbed last year, peaking at 125 days for women and 160 days for families last summer. The eviction moratorium helped to decrease the length of stay for the last quarter of 2020, but we know when that it lifted, the pressure will increase.

I am a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut, having served on that body in a variety of capacities since it's inception in 1999. I am also an active member of CCEH and the CT Non-Profit Community Alliance.

The importance of safe, affordable, and permanent housing cannot be understated. Are we a state that considers a home and roof over head something that only the privileged deserve? I hope not. When our state's residents have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve. Children's health, both physical and mental improve. As do their educational outcomes.

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:

Support the Homelessness Line Item at \$85.5 million, reinstating the \$3M the Governor proposed to cut from this line item. To be honest, \$85.5M does not cover the costs that housing and homeless providers incur to provide these life saving services, we cannot afford a \$3M cut especially this year.

Also Please support funding for the DOH Homeless Youth Line Item at \$2.65M in FY 22 and \$2.94M in FY 23.

In addition to these line items, I urge you to support the following additional investments

\$2.3M in specific funding for Coordinated Access Networks (CANs). The CAN's are providing coordination and structure to the system that allows for greater efficiency and collaboration between nonprofit providers which in turn allows people in crisis to access care and housing quickly..

We are not going to make homelessness rare, brief or non-recurring without affordable housing. According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, Connecticut lacks almost 87,000 units of housing for low-income residents. One way to immediately address this shortage is to invest \$2M the Housing/Homeless Services Line to provide rental assistance for supportive housing units.

The work that shelters and housing professionals do is critical to ending homelessness. For years, the community of nonprofits who provide critical housing services have not been paid the value of those services. I urge to consider the CT nonprofit community alliance proposal to restore \$461M to right size the nonprofits who have not received increases in the past 10 years. This will add \$3M to the DOH line. This is a good start. It is important to consider homeless providers as essential and they should be recognized and compensated for their incredibly dedicated commitment to showing up everyday during a pandemic. Therefore, please support SB340, Adequate funding for homeless and housing providers.

In addition, New Reach staff and board support the following bills:

SB 86

SB 804

HB 6430

HB 6431

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. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Kellyann Day

CEO, New Reach