



TESTIMONY OF KATHLEEN FLAHERTY, ESQ.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CT LEGAL RIGHTS PROJECT, INC.
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
FEBRUARY 19, 2021

Regarding: HB 6439, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR, in particular the budget for the **Department of Housing**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

Good evening. My name is Kathy Flaherty and I am the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), a statewide non-profit agency that provides legal services to low income adults with serious mental health conditions. CLRP was established in 1990 pursuant to a Consent Order that mandated that the state provide funding for CLRP to protect the civil rights of DMHAS clients who are hospitalized, as well as those clients who are living in the community.

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I have served on the Reaching Home Campaign as the representative of the Keep the Promise Coalition. We know that obtaining and maintaining decent, safe, affordable, and accessible housing is one critical element to our clients' ability to build a great life in the community. COVID-19 has demonstrated that being in a congregate setting puts people at increased risk of transmission of the virus; the sooner we can help people transition out of hospitals or shelters to permanent housing, the better.

The governor's budget proposal includes a reduction in the housing/homelessness service line of \$3M "to reflect current expenditure levels." **This cut should be restored.** The expenditures during FY 2021 were impacted by COVID as certain referrals shut down and the system was overwhelmed. Many CLRP clients are ready to leave the state-operated hospital but cannot, because they are on waiting lists for housing in the community. The wait list for state rental assistance program (RAP) vouchers has been closed for years. The need for housing assistance has never been greater – this is not the time for a multi-million dollar cut. In fact, this is the time for **additional investments to the RAP program** so that more individuals and families can

come off the wait list. **\$20M** would help support the lowest-income households obtain housing that is affordable because their share of the rent would be based on their income.

We encourage the committee to allocate an **additional \$2M** to provide scattered-site rental assistance to 200 more households. **Supportive housing** is permanent housing with voluntary supports and services. It is a cost-effective, evidence-based intervention. We need strategic investments in proven solutions that work.

We support the funding on the **DOH Homeless Youth** line for services for homeless youth and young adults so that their unique needs can be met.