



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

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InterCommunity Healthcare for the whole person

Manager of Common Ground Social Rehabilitation Club

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



We are members of the Common Ground Social Rehabilitation Club, members of Keep the Promise Coalition in collaboration with the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut.

Many members of Common Ground know what it's like to be homeless. Many were homeless for years, waiting for a place to call home, living on the streets and under overpasses to survive. They have been in and out of warming centers in the winter, and cooling centers during a heat wave. Some members were once in stable housing, working every day until a layoff or illness took their homes away with no rental assistance available in times of crisis or loss or divorce.

- Receiving assistance can be difficult when you have no way to even prove who you are. Some had family kick them out. Some had no family at all. Some of our members and young adults have come out of foster care. Some turned 18 and became homeless overnight. With no family to turn to, they couch surfed until they overstayed their welcome, only to become homeless and unstable again.
- Others in this group and in our club are not in safe housing, they live in rodent or mold infested homes in unsafe locations. Some are disabled, can live on their own, but need some support to assist them when something happens, and they need immediate supports in place.
- Some are still waiting on a long list and have been for years to get a roof over their heads. Some are living on couches, in cars, in unfinished basements with no address to receive mail that might help them. Times like these can feel hopeless and never ending putting human endurance and spirit through the ultimate test of survival.
- Some members of the club are the lucky ones who were finally able to receive housing assistance in safe affordable housing with the help of initiatives and organizations like InterCommunity and the Reaching Home Campaign, even when they had to wait years. They stand by the other community members who are still waiting for a home.

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.



We 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.
 - o 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.

Supporting the funds outlined above will ensure that those who need and deserve to have housing stability and safety, this basic human need met. It will ensure that citizens will not be evicted or thrown out when a crisis occurs due to rental assistance programs that would become available. They will have support when they turn 18 so that they can get a roof over their heads, a job and job training. They wouldn't be forced to live in the inner cities when their jobs may be elsewhere where there is little or no transportation. They will not get sick with costly chronic conditions from a sick building, and they will feel safe in their homes with supportive housing. We are also concerned about many people who will become evicted during when the moratorium ends and know that this pandemic has brought many to unemployment leading to the homelessness many of us have experienced personally. Members of this club and community will finally have a home address.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony from Common Ground and its members, and for caring and all your hard work. It is with your support that we can help make sure Connecticut's residents are healthy and stably housed.