

Dear members of the Appropriations Committee. This is part of my testimony in support of the Governor's budget which preserves and expands funding for the Homeless Youth Line item. Prior to getting in touch with the connection I was homeless on and off for 3 years (20-23). I was at my wits end and at the point of hopelessness. I will always remember the day a Norwalk program connected me. To say a weight was lifted off my shoulders is an understatement. Upon starting and meeting Amber, my case manager at the connection, it took a month to have me housed. My apartment wasn't perfect but I loved it because for once I had security in my life. Thanks to the program I ended up getting a job within a week and within a month I was promoted to manager of the store because of how hard I worked mainly because I took over the store when my manager was away on vacation. That was something I could never do homeless. Within the year and half I was in the program I managed to get my high school diploma and my license. I honestly don't think I would have accomplished so much in so little of a time. Not only the program but having amber as a case manager, someone who really showed she cared about me. I can't state how much I needed the program and someone like amber in my life at that time to motivate me. The connection gave me the roof and amber gave me the tools and support a young, confused kid like me needed. Since leaving the program I still have 10 grand in savings, I'm still employed, my credit is 700+, and I'm still living a great life that I didn't think I'd ever have. This wasn't just a program for me, it was a lifeline and i still miss my weekly check ups from amber but it's because of her and them that I will never struggle on the streets again. Thank you for taking the time to hear about my story and continuing to support homeless young people in our state.

Sincerely,

Shawn Osorio, Bridgeport, CT