



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

MIRIAM E. DELPHIN-RITTMON,
Ph.D.

Testimony of Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D., Commissioner
Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services
Before the Appropriations Committee
February 23, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and I appreciate the opportunity to testify on Governor's Bill, 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

DMHAS is a healthcare service agency whose mission is to promote the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral health needs, with a focus on mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and promotion of recovery. DMHAS is an essential partner in ensuring the safety of communities through the identification and management of risks related to mental illness and addiction. In FY20 the agency served over 105,000 persons at risk for or experiencing a serious mental health or substance use condition.

The DMHAS system of care is a public/private partnership delivering a wide range of inpatient, outpatient, and recovery support services through our state-operated facilities and contracts with over 165 non-profit community-based agencies statewide. The DMHAS system of care includes 13 Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs), and two distinct hospitals in Middletown, Connecticut Valley Hospital and Whiting Forensic Hospital.

The Governor's budget will allow DMHAS to continue to execute the agency's core mission of promoting wellness, preventing illness, and strengthening a recovery-oriented system of care for people with serious psychiatric and substance use conditions. This budget upholds vital services to individuals who rely on the Department. The budget provides for caseload growth in the Home and Community-Based Waiver account, allowing for 30 new placements in each year of the biennium through the Money Follows the Person program. It also provides caseload growth in the Behavioral Health Recovery Program account (formerly called the General Assistance Managed Care Account) for Medicaid HUSKY D eligible individuals. Additional funding in the Discharge and Diversion account is provided for individuals who no longer require a hospital level of care. In addition, funds reallocated from the Department of Housing to DMHAS will support wrap-around services for 47 individuals anticipated to receive federal HUD vouchers during FY 2022. The budget continues to support

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minimum wage increases for non-profit service providers as well as provide new funds for prevention and enforcement activities related to legalization of cannabis.

This proposed budget for DMHAS includes the reallocation of funding for the Governor's initiative to streamline state government operations by the centralization of human resources and labor relations staff under the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) in FY2020. This initiative modernizes the human resources and labor relations functions across state agencies and ensures the uniform administration of processes, systems, and functions. This adjustment realigns funding for 45 DMHAS staff now reporting to DAS and OPM as a result of the centralization. This budget also recommends the reallocation of funding to centralize funding for Workers' Compensation claims across state agencies to the Department of Administrative Services. Again, the goal here is to ensure a uniform and efficient administrative processes systems, and functions for all state agencies.

DMHAS core services, which include a focus on the opioid epidemic and wellness in the throes of a global pandemic, will be maintained and will continue to promote the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral health needs through an integrated network of holistic, comprehensive, effective, and efficient mental health and substance use services and recovery supports that foster dignity, respect, and self-sufficiency. Our services and supports are culturally responsive, attentive to trauma, build on personal, family and community strengths, and focus on promoting each person's recovery and full citizenship. Integral to all services and supports is an emphasis on prevention, identifying and managing risk, and promoting safety.

DMHAS will continue to evaluate our service system and respond to behavioral healthcare trends by using enhanced data analysis to inform decision making, evaluating state-operated and contracted services to maximize resources, promoting evidenced-based and best practices and by encouraging partnerships to achieve efficiencies in service delivery.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the Committee today. I will be happy to take any questions you may have at this time.