

Testimony Before the Appropriations Committee
March 2, 2021
DMHAS BUDGET HEARING
H.B. No. 6439, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS
THEREFORE

By Daniel Acosta

Good evening, Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Daniel Acosta, and I am a registered voter in the City of Bridgeport.

I am testifying regarding the budget for the next fiscal year for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, **H.B. No. 6439, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023 And Making Appropriations Therefore.**

I would like to speak about a program in Bridgeport that I belong to, Bridge House. Bridge House is a Clubhouse program that helps people like me who live with a mental health condition. The difference that it has made in my life—and that other clubhouse programs across the state have made in the lives of so many others like me—really can't be put into words. But I will do my best.

I have been a member of Bridge House since 2007. When I first started there, I was homeless. It was such a painful time for me. Bridge House drew hope. It gave me a chance to get back on my feet and handle the problems that were surrounding me. I was able to let go of some unhealthy relationships *for the sake of my life*. It gave me the chance to get several positions of work with a variety of people. Around 2012 I made a decision to focus on Bridge House and not my outside life.

Had there not been a Bridge House available to me, I might well have ended up in jail because of my doing something stupid. Life matters—you don't want to harm yourself, but you put yourself in harm's way because you try to find a way to end your problems; you feel pinned into a corner. You don't think straight when you are in a bad situation. People can push you into a certain point to where you can literally hurt somebody before they hurt you. The world feels like hell on earth sometimes. But Bridge House put me in a position to be free of all that. I'm glad I stuck it out and got past that point in my life.

I cry as I give this testimony.

During the COVID pandemic, Bridge House has been like family. We don't die; we live forever. Our ties are unending. Because of Bridge House, we're able to know what's going on with other Clubhouse members. It is a reminder that we are still pressing forward. Bridge House provides someone to talk to. A lot of people like me are not in a good emotional place right now due to this pandemic. Many were already not in a good place even before the pandemic hit; the pandemic just intensified everything. So Bridge House—and programs like it—have become like a lifeline for so many of us.

Our strength is in knowing what lies within us. We cannot forget how important life and love are. We must love to live and live to love. Loving is living; living is loving.

We must remain steadfast in believing that we can get through this. We are all in this one boat together.

I respectfully ask that the funding for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services be increased this budget session. So many of us who rely so deeply on Bridge House and clubhouse programs like it need these services so badly.

Thank you for allowing me to give you my testimony.