

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 THEREFOR
Wanda Austin

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My Name is Wanda Austin and I am a registered voter in the City of Bridgeport.

I am here to testify regarding House Bill No. **6439, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023 And Making Appropriations Therefore.**

I am a member of Bridge House, a mental health clubhouse program in Bridgeport. Before I came to Bridge House I was drinking really heavy. I was told about BH through a member of Bridge House. I told my worker at Life Bridge about it. She put the referral form in and I went to Bridge House's open house. I liked what I saw and I've been there for 3 years!

Now, I stopped drinking last July. I'm taking care of my mental health, thanks to Bridge House. Bridge House did a lot for me and I'm thankful to that member for twisting my arm to follow through and joining Bridge House. I'm in a nice home now, I'm in a much better atmosphere and I'm taking it one day at a time—and loving every minute of it...without a drink. They have given me a tablet so I can watch Bridge House programs on Facebook Live. I love watching the Advocacy show, and got some cooking recipes, thanks to the cooking show. I watch the programs every day, and I'm really grateful. I'm thankful and blessed to have been picked to get a tablet because it keeps me going with Bridge House.

If Bridge House hadn't been there for me I'd probably be back homeless, back in prison, drinking again, sick, and who knows what else. Bridge House has done more for me than my therapist *and* my psychiatrist! Bridge House is my family—that's how I think of Bridge House—and I'm so grateful to the member who persuaded me to become a member at Bridge House. I would never have met the wonderful staff there. I've become friends with a couple of the other members. Bridge House made this possible. I'm now able to open up. I'm truly glad that I'm able to be a member of Bridge House. Please increase funding this year.

Thank you very much for allowing me to give my testimony.