

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 THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS
THEREFOR.

Victor Buchelli

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

My name is Victor Buchelli and I am a registered voter from Naugatuck Connecticut.

I am here to testify regarding H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

I speak on behalf of Mental Health Connecticut's Independence Center, Keep the Promise Coalition as well as myself.

I am a recipient of the Mental Health system. I am diagnosed as schizoaffective disorder & suffer from manic depression. I have been clean from substances for many years now. Thus the term, Dually-diagnosed. I identify with others, the likes of William S., Lenny B., Pete D. or Robin W. & Whoopi G. the list goes on... For me services are very limited. Specifically, co pays, affordable transportation, agencies for rehabilitation, employment, also club houses, etc. I only receive eight hundred and eighty dollars a month. After rent, utilities, medicine costs, then household items I am left with enough for laundry. As far as Esteem needs, I haven't any. This past year has been even more difficult with the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Lack of services and isolation was a real issue for many. As we are aware, services for the handicapped, homeless, and addicted is an uncultivated population. For the most part in a community quickly advancing with the times. As a new dawn of another era begins to flower. Its proper to commence a reform on these social injustices. Begin to erase words synonymous with inequality, the poor, less privileged, poverty, homelessness, & the addicted. Over the past 10 years, non-profit agencies have suffered cuts and I support and increase in funding for non-profits, as the state now has a surplus.

I would also like to mention my support of the peer respite programs and increased funding for supportive housing and rental support and have included some additional comments for you to read when you have time. We must make these frail issues top priority. As its been professed, "the needs of the one, outweigh the needs of the many"...

Thank you for hearing my testimony

We are asking the legislature for six million dollars the first year, and five million in subsequent years for the starting and continuing operation of five peer respites. We ask that five respites be allocated one per DMHAS region and be staffed by persons with lived experience in the mental health field and certified in Intentional Peer Support.

I respectfully request that the committee support the following proposals and expansions from the Governor's budget for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS):

- I support the proposed budget for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services' Housing Supports and Services line at \$23.4 million in each year of the biennium.

- I request a new targeted investment of \$2.25 million in the DMHAS' Housing Supports and Services line to provide supportive services to 300 households in scattered-site and development units.

- I request \$375,000 in new funding in the DMHAS' Housing Supports and Services line for enhanced outreach services that would enable us to better identify individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

I support the Governor's proposal to provide an additional \$4 million in FY22 and \$7.2 million in FY23 in DMHAS for continued discharges from Connecticut Valley Hospital, including 30 new Money Follows the Person placements.

- I request the addition of \$352,500 in each year of the biennium for wrap-around services for 47 individuals anticipated to receive federal HUD Mainstream vouchers during FY22.

- I support the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance proposal to restore \$461 million over five years to community nonprofits. Funding for nonprofits, including those working to end homelessness, does not adequately cover increased costs and demands for services.

Thank you for listening to my testimony today.