

**Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023,  
And Making Appropriations Therefor.**  
**Health Subcommittee**  
**March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Tina DuVall and I am the Program Manager for housing services and the COACH (COVID19 Assistance for Community Health) Program and I work at United Services, Inc. I supervise nine direct care staff members who work with adults who have previously or are currently experiencing homelessness and/or impacted by COVID19.

United Services is the Local Mental Health Authority for 21 towns in Northeastern Connecticut. We are a nonprofit organization providing more than 30 programs to our community, including Outpatient Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment, Family Programs, and Crisis Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in writing on H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor.

I am here to respectfully **request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits.**

United Services is an essential healthcare provider and we have remained open throughout the pandemic. My staff has continued to work with clients to support them in the community and in their homes.

We are continuing to see the impacts of COVID-19 across all of our programs. Some of our programs are currently operating at a more than 200 percent increase in services compared to the same month in 2019.

Our programs have been chronically underfunded, and our staff who provide critical services to our community are alarmingly underpaid. We also have fewer services available to support our clients. Our staff deserve to be paid a livable wage for their work and level of education. I have staff who have to work second jobs to make ends meet and have had staff eligible for the same assistance we help clients to obtain, and that is just unacceptable.

The need for mental health and substance abuse treatment services is expected to grow significantly as we emerge from the pandemic. High turnover rates severely impact client care, which can be reduced with fair wages. Now is the time to invest in substantial improvements and enhancements to the behavioral health system, not to time to flat-fund the DMHAS budget.

Please support the \$6.3 million increase in Discharge & Diversion Services. Community nonprofits, such as United Services, help people avoid most costly care (EDs, jails, or shelters) and get them on a path toward recovery. We need these resources to respond to the needs in our community.