

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
Tuesday, March 2, 10:00 am

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

My name is Benjamin Duda, Young Adult Services Case Manager with United Services, Inc. I and the staff here at United Services, Inc. work over and beyond our requirements to advocate for young adults in the community in order that they successfully meet their goals. We care deeply about their outcomes and do our very best to aid them in their endeavors. This includes helping bridge barriers to transportation, supporting clients through reminders, medical support, client advocacy, and extra support when needed in both the community and with each young adult's personal battles. We also utilize a wraparound system, including support from services and the community, that helps ensure that the young adults will always have a safety net with their support systems. We all work with the young adults via groups, one-on-one meetings with them, case management, clinical sessions, and staff support in order that the young adults do not slip through the cracks.

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 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. I have continued to work with clients to support them in the community.

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.

The need for mental health and substance abuse treatment services is expected to grow significantly as we emerge from the pandemic. 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.