

**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**  
Peter Flynn

Good evening Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Peter Flynn, and I am a registered voter in the Town of Fairfield.

I am here to testify 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.**

It's hard to know where to begin as far the impact Bridge House has had on my life. On a basic level, Bridge House has created a sort of freedom for me. It's a freedom from an otherwise oppressive illness I have to struggle with every day. Just having a place to go whenever you feel like, where people are friendly and encouraging, you can't underestimate the importance of that. Struggling with a mental illness is a little different from other illnesses in that it tends to be really unpredictable. You just aren't sure from day to day what problems you're going to encounter. So, when you have a place to go every day, where they're so supportive and keep you busy with things, it mitigates that part of it. It throws a wrench into things so you're not so overwhelmed by whatever is going on with your symptoms that day.

Routines are also extremely helpful for people with a mental illness, because they keep your mind active which, again, mitigates the problems or symptoms you're having. Put another way, an active mind is a happy mind. And, boy, do they ever keep your mind active at Bridge House. Just the fact that members are mostly running the show there. I mean, there isn't a decision that's made there that members aren't a part of.

On a more personal level, a while back I was allowed to start a political awareness group there. I really enjoy following politics I read about political goings on all the time. So, being able to do that group now and then meant a lot to me. Now that Bridge House has gone virtual, I've occasionally been involved in William Acosta's political advocacy group once a week.

That actually brings up the subject of self-esteem, right? That's probably the one issue most people think of regarding having a mental illness. The whole stigma problem and how that effects your self-esteem. Again, you're looking at mitigation of your symptoms. Bridge House clearly addresses that problem. There's a lot of positive interactions that go on, such as my involvement in helping to run the club house and their openness in allowing me to start a new group. I'd leave the club house at the end of the day thinking, "that was so cool that I did that!"

Ultimately, Bridge House has given so much more to me than I've given to them. Bridge House's contributions to the mental health community is, in a word, immeasurable. They're a vital part of our community as a whole. I just don't want to think of what my life would be like without Bridge House and so I respectfully ask that you increase their funding.

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