



Homes with Hope

Solving homelessness in our communities through supportive housing

Governor's Proposed Budget FY2021-23

Appropriations Hearing

HB 6439 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023

Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services

Tuesday, March 2nd, 2021

Allyson Gottlieb

Board of Director

Homes with Hope

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Gibson, Senator Hartley, Representative Kennedy, Senator Somers, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on House Bill 6439 (AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023). I am here to discuss the important investments through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to support efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut. My name is Allyson Gottlieb and I volunteer as a Director of Homes with Hope in Westport, where I am also a resident.

Homes with Hope is a Westport based agency dedicated to ending homelessness in Fairfield county. Homes with Hope is a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut. We, alongside many other partners in the state, know that safe, affordable, and permanent housing is the only solution to homelessness. When our state's residents have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve. During COVID-19, the need for permanent housing for all of Connecticut's residents has become even more important.

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. The pandemic has further highlighted the connection between housing and mental health. We know that the combination of supportive services and housing has helped those in need find and maintain permanent housing solutions.
- 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.



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- 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.

Since 2012, the number of people utilizing Connecticut's shelter system has decreased by 57%. Investing in proven solutions to homelessness is necessary in continuing our progress and ensuring that every youth, family, and individual has a safe, stable place to call home.

Now more than ever we need to help those people who can't always help themselves. Supportive services and supportive housing is now more important than ever. We need to provide people with a stable housing environment and the support to maintain it. The mental health crisis has become even more severe this past year during the Covid pandemic and has further highlighted the connection between stable housing and mental health

I became involved with Homes with Hope because I am deeply passionate about helping to end homelessness. Access to basic housing and food should not be considered a luxury. Unfortunately this is the case for so many. It is a privilege to be part of an organization whose primary goal is to provide those at risk of experiencing, homelessness by providing food, safe emergency shelter, supportive services, and housing as tools to achieve independent lives.

We know that supportive housing works and is necessary for the most vulnerable members of our community. This DMHAS funding is essential to continue to provide support for those in need and help to end homelessness in Fairfield county and throughout the state.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work making important and life-saving decisions during this public health crisis.

Sincerely,

Allyson Gottlieb

Board of Director, Homes with Hope