

**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**  
**Julianne Gousse**

Hello Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Julianne Gousse, 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.**

Funding for DMHAS is very critical at this time because we are facing and struggling with a Pandemic.

When the Pandemic started, I was in denial. I refused to believe that I and our members were expected to isolate. But, when my place of employment, Bridge House, sent me home to work, I felt very sad, and lonely because Bridge House has come to mean more to me than just a job. I am a social worker by education, but at Bridge House I am a Generalist. That means I work wherever the need is in the program.

I have seen the impact of Bridge House in the lives of the members who are struggling mental illness. I have worked in the Mental Health field prior to coming to work at Bridge House. As a therapist, I had often felt like I was not making much of a difference in the lives of my clients. However, when I came to work in the Culinary Unit of Bridge House, I felt a high level of fulfillment by simply making breakfast and preparing lunch working side by side with the members. Clubhouse International (the world body that accredits Bridge House) is governed by a set of 37 Standards, which hold that meaningful work provides healing to the members who work side by side with staff. I feel that when I am working with clubhouse members, I have the opportunity to see the whole person rather than some random person who is struggling with mental health issues.

In closing, I would like to thank the Appropriations Committee for allowing me to tell why the DMHAS budget is important to Bridge House and to me personally, to be increased.