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Yonique Hendricks
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District 1199NE
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker and member of the Committee, my name is Yonique Hendricks and I am a Housing Coordinator employed with Dept. of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) for 17 years. I currently work at the Western Connecticut Mental Health Network's (WCMHN) Danbury Office. I'm here today to talk about the importance of increasing housing options in Shelter Plus Care & Residential services within DMHAS.

Currently, within the Shelter Plus Care Program, we're understaffed and do not have enough PSH vouchers to fulfill the need for housing homeless individuals who meet our criteria. Housing Coordinators, like myself, are administering vouchers and providing case management services to a very vulnerable population that we serve. During COVID-19, we have continually done our jobs which include services like: Outreach in community meetings with landlords and tenants to do renewals while also trying to provide services to new referrals that we receive from the Coordinator Access Network (CAN).

If DMHAS fails to address this present crisis in the housing PSH program, we will face a situation of individuals placed on a waiting list for 2 or more years! Our vouchers do not have a time limit and therefore there should be no excuse to prohibit expansion to Voucher Access, as well as, staffing simultaneously.

On the residential side of housing, there is a critical back-log due to limited resources in Housing Options. DMHAS should consider re-instating Residential Options that were recently closed due to budgetary constraints. For example, Young Adult Services (YAS), lost our 24 hour programs and our clients are suffering in the meantime as a result of overwhelming demand exacerbated by limited available resources.

DMHAS workers like me need your help. Please allocate funding to the programs I have spoken about, but also to residential housing options within DMHAS. We are in serious need for funding and you can help. Thank you for your time.

