



Governor's Proposed Budget 2021 - 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

**Shawn M Lang Associate Chief Executive
Advancing CT Together**

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 **Shawn M Lang** and I work in **Hartford** and am a resident of **Hartford, CT**.

I am a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut and **I have worked in the areas of HIV/AIDS, Supportive Housing and Homelessness for over 35 years**. 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.

We 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):

People living with HIV/AIDS are deeply impacted by these issues. Housing is often cited as THE most unmet need by this population:

- We 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.
- We 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.
- We 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.

- We 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.
- We 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.
- We 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. Housing insecurity continues to be the most cited issue of people living with HIV/AIDS.

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 – it is with your support that we can help make sure Connecticut’s residents are healthy and stably housed.

Sincerely,

Shawn M Lang

Associate Chief Executive

Advancing CT Together

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