

**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**

**Cindy Lavoie
Finance Director
New Reach, Inc.**

Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Cindy Lavoie and I have had the privilege to work at New Reach for more than 4 years as the Finance Director. New Reach along many other organizations works tirelessly to minimize, prevent and end homelessness in the state of Connecticut. New Reach, along with many of our partners, know that safe, affordable, and permanent housing is the only solution to homelessness. When individuals and families have stable housing, their economic and health outcomes improve for them as well as for their children and for the next generation. What we do today has a direct impact on the generations that follow. If we slow down our current efforts, we will see an exponential effect on the years to come on the number of homelessness and the cost to support family stabilization. During COVID-19, the need is more dire.

We respectfully request that the committee support the following proposals and expansions for the Governor's budget for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS):

- 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.

It is the mission of New Reach to inspire independence for those affected by homelessness and poverty through a continuum of housing and support using the most innovative and progressive methods.



- 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.

In my role at New Reach, I have seen first hand the investment that the State has made and how it has helped so many. I have seen families be able to find safe housing, continue their education, find employment, and even buy a home. The funding has to continue in order for more individuals and families to be stabilized. Our most vulnerable populations will continue to need our help. Since 2012, the number of people utilizing shelter system has decreased by 57%. What an accomplishment! The additional funding proposed for the budget is a step in the right direction to continue this important work.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to send this testimony.

Sincerely,

Cindy Lavoie
Finance Director
New Reach, Inc