



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 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

**Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**

**Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021**

**Rebecca Martin**

**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 30<sup>th</sup>, 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 Rebecca Martin and I volunteer as a Director of Homes with Hope in Westport, where I am also a resident.

I am 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 demand for mental health and addiction support has only increased during the pandemic in our town. Many residents have had adult children return home unable to maintain employment during the resulting economic downturn and unable to cope with the economic stress and isolation that the pandemic has caused.**
- 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. **At Homes with Hope, we have found that supportive services are the key to breaking the cycle of homelessness, by helping clients to maintain their employment, housing, independence and dignity.**
- 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.



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- 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.
- 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.

**Everyone needs help. In addition to serving as a Director of a local homelessness organization, I am the parent of a child with neurological differences. My 12 year-old daughter is bright and capable in many ways. She bakes from scratch and walks home herself. Her abilities and her infectious good attitude will be a benefit to her community, but when I think about her future, I expect that she will require supports to live independently. She is just like the people we are talking about today. She just has a home with her family right now.**

**Everyone deserves housing and everyone deserves the support to maintain it. It just makes sense. If our intention is to continue to permanently house our homeless population—and keep others in their housing—then we must fund and expand those supportive services. Thank you for your continued support to alleviate homelessness in our state.**

Sincerely,

Rebecca Martin

Director

Homes with Hope

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