

Public Hearing on:  
[H.B. 6439](#) An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023,  
and Making Appropriations Therefor.  
Health Subcommittee  
Tuesday, March 2, 10:00 am

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My Name is Frances Massy, Senior Mobile Employment Specialist, with United Services, Inc. My role is to assist and support people who are recovering from Opioid and Stimulant use disorder largely as a result of the Opioid Crisis, meet with them wherever they are in DHMAS supported sober housing and help them find employment, and connect to education and transportation services in Eastern CT so they can rebuild their lives and become contributing citizens of our towns and State.

United Services is the Local Mental Health Authority for 21 towns in Northeastern Connecticut. We are a nonprofit organization providing more than 30 programs to our community, including Outpatient Mental Health, Substance Abuse Treatment, Family and Youth Programs, Crisis Services, Case Management, and Employment Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, and Making Appropriations Therefor.

I am here to respectfully request that the legislature appropriate 461 million dollars over 5 years for community nonprofits.

United Services is an essential healthcare provider and we have remained open throughout the pandemic. I have continued to work with clients to support them in the community.

We are continuing to see the impacts of COVID-19 across all of our programs. Some of our programs are currently operating at a more than 200 percent increase in services compared to the same month in 2019.

Our programs have *for years* been chronically underfunded, and our staff- who provide critical services to our community- are alarmingly underpaid. As a direct result, we have fewer services available to support our clients than we would if we were adequately funded.

The need for mental health services and substance use treatment has grown and is expected to continue to grow significantly even as we emerge from the pandemic. *Now* is the time to invest in substantial improvements and enhancements to the behavioral health system-- not the to time to flat-fund the DMHAS budget, or to try to fool ourselves into thinking we can clean up the devastating consequences of that short-sighted approach later, not only at greater *financial* expense, but at the expense of the health and wellbeing of our most vulnerable citizens, and families and children- an expense that we know has repercussions for years and through generations.

Please support the 6.3 million dollar increase in Discharge & Diversion Services. Community nonprofits, such as United Services, help people avoid most costly care (EDs, jails, or shelters) and get them on a path toward recovery, sustained wellbeing, where they can help our whole community continue to move forward to *economic* health and wellbeing. We need these resources to respond to the needs of our community *now*.