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**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**

**Kimberly May-Miller
Chief Program Officer
Chrysalis Center, Inc.**

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 Kimberly May-Miller and I work in the North End of Hartford and am a resident of Windsor, CT.

I am a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut and have worked with homelessness in Hartford for the last 25 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.

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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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- 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. "Sandra", a 38-year-old African American woman was literally homeless on the streets on Hartford, in the City's North End. She had grown children who would not let her live with them due to her substance use and mental health concerns. Sandra could be verbally aggressive and abusive when trying to get her needs met, so shelters were not an option for her. Housing became available to her in late 2018 and she was elated. Her own bed, tv, sofa and kitchen, where she loved to prepare ethnic foods were her pride and joy. She was able to repair her relationship with her children and grandchildren. Shortly after being housed, Sandra found out that she had a terminal lung cancer. Her diagnosis did not stop her, and she constantly thanked her housing providers for ensuring that she remained housed. Sandra was housed for approximately seven months before she passes away quietly at home with her family around her.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony and share Sandra's story. It is because of your compassion and leadership that I am hopeful that we can make a difference in our under-served communities and ensure that services and resources are available. I look forward to working with you to make sure Connecticut's residents are healthy and stably housed.

Sincerely,

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