

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
March 2, 2021
DMHAS BUDGET HEARING
H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING
APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.
Testimony by Jesse Middleton

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Jesse Middleton, and I am a registered voter in East Hartford testifying for H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Before Common Ground, as a young man, I was working a Fairfield Inn in Windsor Locks for five years. I was diagnosed with a mental illness when I was 20 years old. They thought I was paranoid and everyone was staring at me, so I started a medication which gave me a shaking in my whole body. I'm 49 years old and I've been shaking for 29 years. I have chronic Tardive Dyskinesia from side effects of the medication for schizophrenia, and sometimes it shakes me constantly when I sleep, and it's hard for me to eat.

Years ago, we lived in a house in Hartford. We suffered a house fire and had to live with my cousin. I stayed home to go to Common Ground because I couldn't find work because of the shaking. Ever since our family had its house fire, I've been living with my sister and her kids. I would like to have housing and a job, but for years they made cuts to employment training and the waiting lists are very long for housing help.

I have learned how to cook and clean and how to work at the Canteen store at the Common Ground Social Rehabilitation Club. I've learned how to use a computer. I used to help with maintenance. I love to dance. This year, I learned how to draw and write poetry on zoom groups and use

Telehealth to make it easy to talk to my doctors. I still wish I could live on my own, go to work and pay bills for the house.

I can't wait to get back to Common Ground and see my friends in person. Community Support has helped me get to my appointments, helped me to get medications, and applications done, and to receive assistance to live. I like to go to on the trips with Common Ground so that I can feel great again. I used to be shy and didn't want to talk, and my peers made me feel comfortable to talk to people. It made me feel great to make some friends and have a purpose and place to go every day, a place that cares about me.

Please continue Telehealth services so that I can get to all my appointments on time and when I need to because I can't drive and public transportation has been hard and risky because of the Covid. Please increase the DMHAS budget so that I can someday receive housing and get occupational assistance so that I can work again. If you increase the budget I know that InterCommunity will be able to help me and others like me get to where they need to be in life and I'll have fun while I'm doing it. It makes me feel good to get a job, go to work, and earn money to live. I deserve that chance.

I also ask that you please fund Peer Respite in CT one house per DMHAS region – \$6 million would be needed the first year, and five million in subsequent years to start and maintain the five peer respites. It should be staffed by persons with lived experience in the mental health field and certified in Intentional Peer Support.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today.