

JOURNEY HOME



**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**

**Matthew Morgan
Executive Director
Journey Home**

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 Matthew Morgan and I work in the Capitol Region and am a resident of Plainfield, CT.

I am a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut and have worked for ten years as the Executive Director of Journey Home. Journey Home serves as a backbone agency to coordinate the efforts to end homelessness and the systems of homeless services and housing in the Capitol region, known as the Coordinated Access Networks. I am advocating today for the approximately two thousand people who experience homelessness in the Capitol Region every year. Journey Home's daily interactions with executive leadership, middle management, and front-line staff at our partner agencies that provide emergency shelter, homeless outreach, housing, and services gives us a unique view that allows us to help identify gaps in our system and implement solutions.

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. These investments in supports and services are working. We have reduced *chronic* homelessness by 80 percent since 2015. Since 2012, the overall number of people utilizing Connecticut's shelter system has decreased by 57%. With new federal resources awarded in 2019 to help address youth homelessness, we have cut the average amount of time that youth experience homelessness by almost by half in the Capitol region from 182 days on average to 97 days on average. Any cuts to these critically important line items for services will reverse our progress on ending chronic homelessness because more people will become chronic, and will only exacerbate the overall problem of homelessness in the community. Without this funding, we will not be able to provide these individuals with the supports and services they need to get housed and stay housed. It could also mean increases in people sleeping in the streets, under bridges, and in the woods. When people move from the streets and shelters into permanent

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housing, we are saving the State and our taxpayers money. The emergency departments, inpatient facilities, detox, intensive rehab, intermediate rehab, recovery programs, jails, and legal costs are incredibly expensive services, and far more expensive than housing with services.

- 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. The overall homeless population still remains large and the current level of resources do not allow the CANs the ability to meet the needs of the majority of the individual men and women experiencing homelessness.
- 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. Our biggest gap in the Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network for years has been homeless outreach services. We MUST invest more in this area to ensure that people sleeping outside can access the housing and services that they need.
- 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.

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.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work making important and life-saving decisions during this public health crisis – it is with your support that we can help make sure Connecticut's residents are healthy and stably housed.

Sincerely,



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