



Advocacy and Action
for Connecticut's
Mental Health

**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.
Elvin Nieves**

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

My name is Elvin Nieves and I am a registered voter in Hartford.

I am here to testify regarding H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

I am writing this testimony to ask you to continue and increase funding Non-Profit organizations like Intercommunity and their Common Ground Social Club. Over the past year during the Covid-19 Pandemic I have become increasingly isolated and lonely. I don't know what I would have done without Common Ground and Intercommunity. I have been able to attend Socially distanced groups outside in the park when the weather permitted. I have had telehealth for both therapy and socialization. Common Ground has also sent me care packages with hats, gloves, masks and other items like coloring books and word finds to help cope with being alone.

More importantly though, Intercommunity helped save my life! I used to work at Bradley Airport for 23 years when they gave me a retirement package. I was living with my brother. When he died, I went nuts! I lost my brother, my home and my job all at once. All I was thinking about was getting rid of myself too- that's the truth! I was living in the streets 5 years ago. I used to clean up the benches so I could lay down and sleep. I would get up in the morning to get some coffee and head right back to the park thinking about my brother and my losses. Then a friend from Bradley Airport saw me, and gave me the number to InterCommunity, to give me a psychiatrist, therapist, housing, and case manager all within two weeks! Although I was on a waiting list for over 3 years for housing, my case manager was able to find a place for me within 30 days! I am still living in the same apartment and it's heaven for me!

Now, I have friends. My family is Common Ground. I don't have any family in CT. I found a group of friends that have been through similar lives. It's a

good place to be. I volunteer as a member rep, bring on new members, do outreach to others so that they can find help in the same way I was helped. I have a purpose now, and I hope I can win my family back with what I've learned.

If the state cuts funding, I would go crazy. The only place I know to go is Common Ground. They gotta bring more money to it, not cut it so that they can help us keep helping others. I go to Common Ground and the Occupational Therapy meetings, and they help me to learn how to keep going on in life. I would like to let you know that if you do have to cut some things, don't cut at all services that help people get back on their feet from homelessness and despair. I would still be homeless if not for InterCommunity, Common Ground and DMHAS that help fund them. I got everything through their help. What more could I ask for? That's what everyone needs, a place to live, be safe, learn, live and belong.

The only thing I ask is; please, I'm begging you, don't cut the funding, increase the funding. Let us be who we are, and let them (InterCommunity and DMHAS) do what they do best; take care of us, so we can learn to take care of ourselves and others.

Thank You for listening to my testimony today.

Sincerely,

Elvin Nieves