

Public Hearing on:

H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023,
And Making Appropriations Therefor,

Health Subcommittee

Tuesday, March 2, 10:00am

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

My name is Janet Puszczynski and I am a manager for two adult social programs at United Services. I have been employed at United Services for over 33 years

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 Programs, and Crisis 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 over five years for community nonprofits.

United Services is an essential healthcare provider and we have remained open throughout the pandemic. My staff and 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 operating at a more than 200 percent increase in services compared to the same month in 2019.

Our programs have been chronically underfunded, and our staff who provide critical services to our community are alarmingly underpaid. A case manager with a four year college degree makes \$14.62 an hour as compared to a cashier at Target who makes \$15.00 an hour with a high school education. The low wages result in a high staff turnover that disrupts the continuity of care. Our clients have reported to me that it is difficult to constantly start over with a new case manager or a new therapist.

The need for mental health and substance abuse treatment is expected to grow significantly as we emerge from the pandemic. Now is the time to invest in improvements and enhancements to the behavioral health system, not the time to flat fund the DMHAS budget,

Thank you for Listening.

Janet Puszczynski

