



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

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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 Todd Regan and I work in the New Haven community and am a resident of Hamden, CT.

I am a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut and I work for New Reach as a certified Recovery Support Specialist. New Reach has been providing housing and homeless services to the greater New Haven community for over 30 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.
- 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.

My role as a Recovery Support Specialist with New Reach allows me to witness firsthand, the advantages of granting the right of stable housing to those most in need. In addition to my work with New Reach, I can speak from my past experience as a homeless, drug addicted individual residing on the streets of New Haven. In my experience, a path to recovery was unforeseeable due to my lack of basic needs. The uncertainty of whether I would be safe, warm, or healthy in the night to come would trump any thought of hope or security. My time spent experiencing homelessness consisted of countless hospital visits for reasons ranging from overdoses, infections, injuries, mental health crises, and more. There were even times where I would wish I had a reason to be admitted to a hospital, just to receive some form of shelter and care. It was not until I was stably housed that I could finally heal. Only with my fundamental needs met was it possible to capture and experience the therapeutic value of services I received and a conceivable path to recovery. Knowing I had a stable place to rest my head at night alleviated the pressures and dangers that came with homelessness and allowed me to focus and put in the tremendous effort that is required to walk a worthwhile path of recovery. Because I was given that opportunity, I have now been free from addiction for almost two years, I am no longer dependent on public aid as a means of survival, and I haven't had a mental health or addiction related hospital visit since the treatment phase. At this time, our community needs and is deserving of DMHAS funded programs and services that are proven to be effective for not only me, but also my clients.



Every day, I get to work with young adults, many suffering from mental illness, who have recently experienced homelessness. With many of my clients, I am able to witness, day by day, their belief in their own capabilities and hope for the future improving dramatically. Since being housed, a spark has been ignited that fuels ambition. Now that they are housed, the clients I serve are eager to address all the pressing issues in their lives that were pushed aside during their time spent homeless and engage in a plan of action that will help them reach their full potential. It is truly a remarkable experience to take part in. Some of my clients tell me they don't know if they would still be here today if it wasn't for obtaining housing, and I think that alone speaks volumes to the significance of the funding for DMHAS.

I would like to thank the committee for hearing my testimony today, and for your unceasing efforts to make the important decisions that are saving lives in our community. It is with your help that those most affected by the public health crises we face today will be rewarded a fair chance at healthy, meaningful lives. Thank you for being part of the solution.

Sincerely,

Todd Regan
Recovery Support Specialist
New Reach, Inc.