



**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
Governor's Proposed Budget FY22 and FY23  
(HB 6439 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023)  
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services**

**CHELSEA ROSS  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES**

Representative Betts and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony during the Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed Budget for Health Agencies on March 2<sup>nd</sup> in support of imperative investments made through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). During the hearing, Representative Betts asked for more information on what the requested \$375,000 in funding in each year of the biennium for additional homeless outreach services via the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Housing Supports and Services Line Item would support. I submit the following additional information for your consideration.

A \$375,000 investment in homeless outreach services would be used to fund experienced outreach providers across the state to reach approximately 145 more individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness. Current available funding is insufficient to provide the needed coverage in homeless outreach services across our cities and rural areas. In 2020, we know at least 324 individuals and families were experiencing unsheltered homelessness<sup>1</sup>. Our homeless outreach teams are providing critical services to these individuals and are actively in the community seeking out unsheltered residents that we do not yet know about.

Folks living outside or in unsafe and uninhabitable living situations often face some of the most complex challenges and are extremely vulnerable. Homeless outreach workers engage these individuals in the community, assessing and addressing their immediate needs, and working to connect them to longer term supports including housing, intensive case management, linkages to clinical services, employment and more. While individuals who are unsheltered can be the most complex to engage and serve, the work to connect them to safer, healthier, stable housing saves the state higher costs in other systems and often saves individuals lives.

This request was developed by the partners of the *Reaching Home Campaign* which brings together over 120 state and non-profit partners to identify and implement data-driven policy solutions and prepare a consensus legislative agenda. Together, our partners looked at the current availability of outreach services and the need based on the data we have. Our partners collectively

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<sup>1</sup> CT Point-In-Time Count 2020

agreed to prioritize this relatively small but impactful investment as part of our agenda as a key piece of ending homelessness in Connecticut.

Thank you for considering our testimony and thank you for your commitment to the thousands of individuals and families DMHAS works to serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CR', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chelsea Ross  
Deputy Director  
Partnership for Strong Communities

