

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 30, 2023 AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS
THEREFORE
Amanda Sage

Good evening, Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Amanda Sage, and I am a registered voter in the City of Ansonia.

I am testifying regarding the budget for the next fiscal year for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, **H.B. No. 6439, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023 And Making Appropriations Therefore.**

I am here today to talk about how clubhouses and other peer support programs like Bridge House help people achieve and maintain recovery.

I was born in Bridgeport and grew up in Monroe. I had a rough time in school, dealing with severe bullying issues for the majority of my school years. When I graduated high school in 2008 I wanted to start over so I went to Pennsylvania for nursing school.

Within a month after starting college I starting struggling. As a result, I was diagnosed with Bipolar disorder in February 2010, and by 2013 I had failed out of school, been hospitalized twice and had moved back to Connecticut with my parents. I had 4 more hospitalizations that year making a grand total of 6, and found holding a job impossible.

In June 2013 I started at Bridge House. Right away I found a family that gave me something I hadn't had in a long time, hope. Through their love and support I started to feel like I could go back to work someday and, most importantly, that there was a place for me in this world. They picked me back up after an unsuccessful job at Dunkin Donuts, then helped me get my job as a cashier at CVS. Eventually I decided I wanted to work in the pharmacy so Bridge House helped me get into Housatonic Community College's Pharmacy Tech program. After that I transferred to the pharmacy at that same CVS as a full-time technician, and I have been working there for over 5 years now!

Programs like Bridge House may not provide traditional *treatment* for mental illness but they are often the balancing force that allows many people like me to hold a job, have a home, and be able to live a full life in the world. I can say for sure that if Bridge House disappeared tomorrow, I would be unable to keep my job and my apartment and most likely wouldn't even be alive. So please, as you navigate through this budget year, try to remember that for me and all the others in my place our lives could be at stake.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to give my testimony.