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**Governor's Proposed Budget FY2021-23  
Appropriations Hearing  
HB 6439 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services  
Tuesday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021**

**Bianca Shultz  
Permanent Supportive Housing Case Manager  
Beth-El Center, Inc.**

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 30<sup>th</sup>, 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 Bianca Shultz and I work in Milford, CT and am a resident of Bridgeport, CT.

I am a member of the statewide Reaching Home Campaign to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut and Permanent Supportive Housing Case Manager. 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.

This is my first time testifying and I feel braver than ever. This is my opportunity to continue advocating for the communities we serve. I have been in this work of ending homelessness for 3 years now and just in little time, I have not only listened to many stories of survival but also learned how unfunded our resources are. Many individuals have shared their stories of survival which include, how to obtain food, a warm place to lay their head, clothing, medications, and many other things that are not available for easy access. Unsheltered individuals sleeping in severe cold weather face frostbite, negative health outcomes and possibly even death. Today we need change, change for those who have had to make decisions between paying their rent or feeding their children. I have worked with many families who have struggled to maintain. They live day to day deciding which bill is more important than the other.

During this last year, we learned that while our world went into hiding, our essential workers could, and most importantly did not. We provided endless care and safety to the communities, facing daily fear and challenges. The truth is many people are still in their apartments and houses due to the state's eviction moratorium which is set to expire. At these very moments, with COVID-19 still being present, we have no idea how many individuals and families will soon become homeless. We can help individuals recover and not face endless trauma. The importance of funding housing, shelters, diversion services, essential staff, and every important resource for those in need is at an all time high.



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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), they are critical to the infrastructure we need to end and prevent homelessness throughout the state.

- 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.

Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to present this testimony, and for your hard work making important and life-saving decisions during this public health crisis – it is with your support that we can help make sure Connecticut's residents are healthy and stably housed.

Sincerely,

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