

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
THEREFOR
By Sharon Stevenson

Good evening, Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Sharon Stevenson and I am a registered voter in the City of Bridgeport.

I am testifying regarding the budget 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.**

If it wasn't for God, who helped me through my trials, I would be a mess. I also attend Bridge House, a psychiatric rehabilitation program in Bridgeport. Before Bridge House, I was homeless, sleeping outside on cardboard boxes and carrying guns on my person to protect myself. Bridge House helped me find housing. It has helped me to get along with people, to improve my self-esteem, to work in the program's Snack Bar, Food Pantry, Education area, serving lunch, participating in Advocacy events, ushering at the door (bringing guests in and showing them the room where they will be attending meetings or activities), and much more. I have also even sung at our holiday parties and open mic days. Because of Bridge House, I got a job working at the YMCA in Westport, at Mental Health CT, and at AJ Wright clothing store. I also am involved a lot in my church. I usher and I have sung in the choir.

I have a case manager by the name of William. He is an inspiration in my life. He guides me like a dad. He helps me with my papers and with doing the right thing. I have known him for 23 years.

I am the new Sharon—not the old Sharon. The old, homeless Sharon used to drink, smoke, carry guns and hang at the bars and gamble at the casinos.

I am Sharon—the new Sharon—the new creation. I no longer carry guns, I no longer drink, I am not homeless anymore, and I get along with people. I am thankful for Bridge House and all its services. Please increase funding to Bridge House and mental health programs like it.

Thank you for reading my testimony.