



Scott Brabant
Board Chair

Luis B. Pérez, LCSW
President & CEO

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee, Health Subcommittee, regarding:

H.B. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTEENTH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

**Public Hearing
Tuesday, March 2 ~ 10:00 am**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. My name is Chris Thomas and I wish to share comments in regard to H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor.

I currently serve as the Board of Director's Vice Chairman and Secretary of Mental Health Connecticut (MHC), a 113-year-old nonprofit, and have been a board member for six years. I am here to express my concern on the proposed state budget and to share my perspectives on MHC, an organization that continues to demonstrate its value through excellent delivery of high-quality mental health services.

I am here to respectfully request that the legislature **appropriate \$461 million over five years** for community nonprofits. Since 2007, community nonprofits have not been adequately funded by at least \$461 million in state funding which has not kept pace with inflation and continues to make it difficult to adequately cover increased costs and demand for services. To address this situation please:

- Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2026;
- Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2022, a 7% increase;
- Index future increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs going forward.
- Hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impact of COVID-19

In the proposed DMHAS budget, it is important to make recovery support a priority in Connecticut. The need for mental health treatment services is expected to grow significantly as the State emerges from the Covid-19 pandemic. This is the time to provide additional funding for the DMHAS budget due to this increased demand and required improvement for services. In 2020, we all discovered that our mental health is as important as our physical health. I hope that we have finally arrived at a place of common understanding that mental health challenges can affect anyone in society at any time. I spent my entire career in the manufacturing industry in Connecticut and experienced first-hand how a supportive workplace is critical to the health of everyone in that environment. Many of my friends, family members and co-workers could have benefitted from better and simpler access to important mental health services.



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Although I have been with MHC for six years, last year really demonstrated the flexibility and responsiveness of our organization. At the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the staff of MHC had to shift programs and their individual roles, how they work, when they worked, and what was needed to take care of the people we serve and their coworkers. This clearly demonstrated just how strong and resilient this organization is and how the return on the State's investment in MHC is remarkably high.

Community nonprofits are the third largest industry in Connecticut, yet the most underfunded. Since 2007, community nonprofits have not been funded by at least the \$461 million required to keep pace with inflation or adequately cover increased costs and demand for services. In addition, without this funding required for competitive wages and benefits it is more difficult to recruit and retain the skilled, dedicated employees to deliver the high level of client care required. As a result, we respectfully request that the legislature appropriate the full \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits.

Please ensure that community-based services are adequately funded so that MHC and all our nonprofit counterparts can continue this important work. Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration today.

Respectfully,

Chris Thomas
Vice Chairman and Secretary
MHC Board of Directors