



March 26, 2021 Public Hearing Testimony before the Connecticut General Assembly's Appropriations Committee In support of Senate Bill 340: An Act Concerning Funding for Housing Services

Testimony given on March 26, 2021:
<https://youtu.be/tR4Mmvxgx58?t=8044>

Submitted by: Lee Boratynski
Rapid Re-housing Case Worker and Employment Specialist at New Reach

I thank the distinguished members of the Appropriations committee for their time and consideration. This testimony is in support of Senate Bill 340.

My name is Lee Boratynski. I live in Ridgefield, CT. I work at New Reach Inc. in New Haven, CT as a Rapid Re-housing Case Worker and Employment Specialist. I am a service-connected disabled veteran of the US ARMY, I am a person who has a mental health diagnosis, and I am a person who has experienced homelessness himself. I'd like to be clear that If it weren't for the homelessness and mental health services I have received over the years, and the workers who provided them, I would not be in the amazing position I am today. I am getting married on April 10th, I am doing great at a full-time job where I get to help others, I am back in college, and many areas of my life are still getting better!

People like the workers who helped me, workers like my colleagues, and yes even myself, are often struggling to afford our day to day lives with the current pay and benefits offered in the work we do. Senate Bill 340 will help to get benefits and pay up to a level that will allow the selfless, compassionate, and dedicated individuals who work in human services to earn a sustainable living.

I know that you are all serious about ending homelessness, but you absolutely need us to accomplish this necessary goal. The front-line workers who staff the shelters, homeless outreach workers, housing navigation workers, and case managers (to name a few of the kinds of workers involved) are all dangerously underpaid. I happen to work at an outstanding organization with pay that is 'competitive'- but it is only competitive compared to other jobs like it in my field. The pay, when compared to the work involved, the level of skill involved, the deep compassion, and the commitment of human services workers- is next to nothing. We do it because we love to help people, because it is who we are. Even living in debt and paycheck to paycheck or worse at times, we *still* do it, but if things do not change we will see fewer and fewer qualified people come into these fields and even fewer than that *stay* in the fields.



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Please use this bill as a way to start helping the helpers. Please fight your hardest to get us the funding to show workers like my colleagues and I that the State cares and that we are appreciated and valued.

Quickly I'd like to also support House Bill 6662, because I literally get to see how racism wrongs my clients every day I work. Racism is destroying this country, and this bill is a step in fighting that destruction.

Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to consider my testimony, it is an honor to be able to contribute to making a difference in Connecticut and hopefully out into the nation at large.

Sincerely,

Lee Boratynski
Rapid Re-housing Case Worker and Employment Specialist
New Reach, Inc.