

**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**

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Committee on Appropriations: Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of submit testimony Senate Bill 340, An Act Concerning Funding for Housing Services.

My name is Kellyann Day and I am the CEO of New Reach, an organization whose mission it is make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

I am here today to respectfully request that state consider SB 340, and enact a law requiring state agencies to ensure that funding levels for homelessness and housing assistance services reflect the true cost of these professional services, including paying competitive wages and benefits to front-line workers and the agencies that support them.

I cannot speak for all agencies, but I can speak on behalf of the 77 employees at New Reach. Women and people of color are offering lifesaving housing and services to men women and children who are homeless. They worked through COVID. New Reach's Life Haven Shelter for families did not close, we reduced our census to offer a quarantine floor for new families coming into the shelter to stay, until their tests came back.

I can proudly say New Reach worked through covid, with site coordinators and case managers on site, 24/7. Their dedication is nothing short of courageous. But this not a COVID issue, it's been an issue for years.

SB 340 can correct two problems we have. The first problem is gender and racial inequity. The majority of the paraprofessionals and professionals who are employed by nonprofits providing shelter are predominately female and people of color. At New Reach 81% of our staff are female and 62% are BIPOC. Compare that to our shelter staff, 95% are female and 81% are people of color. Women and people of color represent the majority of social services jobs and should be paid for the value of the work they bring to the community.

The second problem is no structure or coordination for how we are reimbursed for the services we provide. The fact is the state does not pay for the services that they require us to provide and shelter, CAN programs, diversion and others. The fact is the state does not pay for the reporting they require us to do, weekly, monthly and yearly. The fact is the state does not pay for the safety and health of the operations of our physical sites. The state does not pay for the support and training front line staff should have, when working with a population in crisis, but they expect us to provide it anyway.

Organizations that successfully fund raise in the private market, have been filling the gap the state has abdicated for years. But we can no longer continue to fill the gap with private

dollars. The cost of employee, support and operate has increased, with no additional dollars. Philanthropy has told us they cannot fill the gaps for all the agencies that are asking.

Please partner with us to change the way the system is funded. Correct the disparities in wages for women and people of color, who represent most professionals providing these social services. Let us work together to figure out a way to support the agencies that support the employees that support the people. It is the reason we exist.

SB 340 is a bill that will :

1. Require the state to establish an independent, evidence-based process to set rates which reflect the optimal and sustainable costs of operating an emergency crisis response system to serve everyone who experiences a housing crisis.
2. Require the state to establish an independent, evidence-based process to set new rates which reflect the optimal and sustainable costs of the services and operations provided to end homelessness.
3. This review must consider living wages, overtime and hazard pay, fringe and benefits, and other than personnel costs such as supervision, supplies, staff training and professional development, technology administrative support, and more.
4. These standards and revised payment structure should then be revised each biennium based on a review of changes to cost-of-living and other cost changes.
5. Require the Commissioners of DOH, DMHAS, and other housing related funding department to use the revised payment structure and standards as the basis of any new services contracts.

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,  
**Kellyann Day, LMSW**  
**CEO New Reach**

[www.newreach.org](http://www.newreach.org)