

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee  
February 20, 2013  
Support for Department of Housing Budget**

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Daniela Giordano, and I am the Public Policy Director for Adult, State, and National matters for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Connecticut. I am here today on behalf of NAMI Connecticut to thank the Governor for his continued support of supportive housing as seen in the implementation of the new Department of Housing (DOH).

**We support the transfer of programs to the new Department of Housing including the Department of Mental Health and Addictions Services' Federal Supportive Housing Program (Shelter Plus Care) as a way to re-structure and transform Connecticut's state government, making it more effective and efficient.**

The Interagency Council on Affordable Housing's January 2013 report details the Council's recommendations for the implementation of the new Department of Housing. The report points out that despite the operation of many good housing programs in Connecticut, people seeking help face numerous barriers to accessing affordable, and when needed, supportive housing. Issues in the current housing delivery system include lack of a convenient centralized access to information, lack of funding predictability, fragmentation of programs and resources, inflexible processes and inadequate opportunities to provide input to effect change in processes, policies and decision making on the state level.

The implementation of the Department of Housing would address these problems through centralized leadership and coordination which would be able to create a lasting vision for a statewide housing agenda.

As documented in the report, the state's housing programs are currently divided among different state agencies. Consolidation of housing programs into the new Department of Housing will allow for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to housing policies and programs and allow for better communication and understanding across systems. People seeking support would be able to reach out to one entity for housing-related issues and assistance instead of having to figure out and navigate multiple access points and agencies. This will contribute to a

more consumer-friendly experience. The consolidation of housing production, operation and financing will enhance productivity and allow for maximizing resources.

We support the thoughtful recommendation to NOT transfer clinical services to the new Department on Housing, including services for individuals with mental illness, but instead maintain these specialized services within the appropriate state agencies to allow for uninterrupted service delivery by trained staff.

Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully yours, Daniela Giordano