



Joint Committee on Appropriations, February 18, 2014

Testimony of Alicia Woodsby, Partnership for Strong Communities, on the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Budget Proposal

Good afternoon, chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Alicia Woodsby, and I'm the Deputy Executive Director of the Partnership for Strong Communities, a statewide nonprofit policy advocacy organization dedicated to preventing and ending homelessness, expanding affordable housing, and creating strong communities. The Partnership staffs two statewide campaigns – Reaching Home and HOME Connecticut. Reaching Home is the campaign to build the civic and political will to prevent and end homelessness in Connecticut.

I am testifying on the Governor's budget proposal for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services in strong support of the \$1.1 million for services dollars for 110 additional units of scattered site supportive housing.

In 2013, the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) was able to provide a more accurate estimate of the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in Connecticut, which stood at 3,006 persons for 2012. Results from the 2013 Connecticut Point-in-Time Count showed our state's unsheltered population increased by 1/3 between 2011 and 2013 and 82% since 2009. Almost half (43%) of the people who were unsheltered were adults experiencing chronic homelessness.

The Reaching Home campaign created a public-private partnership to implement Opening Doors-CT, a statewide framework to prevent and end homelessness based on the federal Opening Doors plan. Opening Doors-CT aspires to end chronic homelessness by 2017 – this would require an investment in a little over 2,700 units over the next four years. 110 new units of scattered site permanent supportive housing are a critical advancement toward meeting this need.

Overwhelming evidence links permanent supportive housing to stability and success for vulnerable individuals and families who are chronically homeless. Permanent supportive housing is proven to reduce the use of high cost public services like emergency rooms, prisons, and nursing homes. It is the best known and most cost effective solution to chronic homelessness.

No one should be without a safe, affordable place to live. Homelessness is unacceptable and expensive. Please support this investment in a long term solution.

I am available to address any question.

Thank you very much.