February 26th 2019

From: Jennifer Paradis, Beth-El Center, Inc.

To: Appropriations Committee

Re: H.B. 7188 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2021, and Making Appropriations Therefor

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Jennifer Paradis and I am the Executive Director of the Beth-El Center, Inc. We provide a 34-bed Emergency Shelter for men, women, families and veterans, a public soup kitchen a permanent supportive housing program, a winter No Freeze shelter and Outreach and Engagement services to the Greater Milford community. I, like many, do this work with a passion to create a better life for everyone, those we serve and the communities that we are a part of. I also do this work because I am someone with lived experience, experiencing homelessness as a young adult.

I submit this testimony in order to comment on H.B. 7188 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2021, and making appropriations therefor.

I represent an agency of 22 employees who, with over 100 volunteers, served 29,000 meals, housed over 100 clients and supported 63 individuals in our No Freeze shelter program in 2018. On behalf of our agency, I would like to thank the Governor for his proposal to adjust funding for the Subsidized Assisted Living Demonstration, for his proposal to expand funding and services to implement the Medicaid Supportive Housing Benefit for High Cost, High Need Individuals, his proposal to expand funding to provide Rental Assistance Vouchers for the DSS Long-Term Care Rebalancing Strategy, the expansion of Rental Assistance under Money Follows the Person and the proposal to annualize the 1% of Cost of Living Adjustment for Private Providers. Although these items do not directly impact the funding streams that allow us to operate our life saving services at Beth-El, the support provided ensures that more vulnerable folks will not succumb to homelessness.

With that said, it is critical to sustain proposed funding for the Department of Housing’s Housing and Homelessness line item-$78.4M for FY 20 and $84.8M for FY 21 as well as to support the preservation of the Homeless Youth line item- $2.3M in FY 20 and FY 21 and support the reallocation of Community Investment Account funding in the General Fund to provide support for the Coordinated Access Networks, the 2-1-1 Info line, cold weather protocol, and grants in the new Housing Supports line item.

We have had incredible success in reducing homelessness throughout the state. Preservation and expansion of these critical dollars will ensure that we do not go backwards but rather that we are adequately equipped to end homelessness in Connecticut.

As a formally homeless person who was afforded the opportunity to lead an agency that addresses this work, I can speak to the impact of these dollars. They provide the ability to change lives and transform communities. It is critically important to allow nonprofits to reduce state costs, serve more individuals and meet the demand for services but we need your support in order to do this together.

Thank you for your time and your support.

Jennifer Paradis
Executive Director
Beth-El Center, Inc.