Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Lavielle, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

I wish to express my support of the proposed funding for the Department of Housing’s Housing and Homelessness line item as proposed: $79.4M for FY 20 and $84.8M for FY 21.

Connecticut continues to lead the nation in efforts to address the important and expensive problem of homelessness. These funds are critical to advancing our statewide efforts to end homelessness; budgeting needs to be maintained at this level, if not grown, in order to achieve this goal in a timely manner. Housing is a human right, and we must do what we can to help those in our community have a safe place to lay their heads at night.

The Housing and Homelessness line item is at the core of the state’s efforts to end homelessness. It includes frontline homeless services, outreach, emergency shelters, and the Rental Assistance Program (RAP) which is a critical component for supportive housing. All of these components are essential to aid those who have fallen into homelessness and move them quickly into housing. At ImmaCare, we have team members executing work in all these vital areas and we, like other agencies, depend on state funding to be able to maintain a seamless interconnected system that works toward efficiently ending homelessness.

Our Outreach Case Manager works directly with people who are living in places not meant for human habitation, such as under bridges and in abandoned buildings; these folks typically have severe mental health challenges that prevent them from being able to sustain life in a shelter. He works with them to obtain permanent housing and provides basic life-saving supplies while they are working toward this goal. Our Emergency Shelter provides services to up to 75 clients daily, who receive food, shelter, and access to countless resources; each client is offered case management services and with their case manager creates an individualized housing plan to reach their goals of obtaining permanent housing. When a client is housed in ImmaCare’s Permanent Supportive Housing Program, each client is offered case management services, geared toward helping them maintain their housing and continue working toward other personal goals as indicated by their person-centered service plans.

Homelessness is a costly, multifold problem; in the toll it takes on human lives, and in consuming substantial public resources. Hartford is fortunate to have a network of professionals in different agencies and programs who work as a team, rather than silos, to progress toward our common goals through the Greater Hartford Coordinated Access Network. We know that through coordinated efforts to utilize resources and secure the right housing and support systems we can resolve homelessness in Greater Hartford. Other providers do the same type of work with successful impacts in each of the CT CANs. The net gain to those we serve, to our communities, and to our state is clear: it costs more to allow homelessness to persist than it does to resolve it.

Thank you for hearing my testimony and thank you for your continued support of efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

Louis J. Gilbert
Executive Director
ImmaCare Inc.

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