Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Miriam Delphin-Rittmon, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and I am here to discuss the Governor’s recommended biennial budget for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

As you know, DMHAS is a health care service agency whose mission is to promote the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral health needs, with a focus on prevention, treatment, and promotion of recovery. DMHAS is an essential partner in ensuring the safety of our communities through the identification and management of risks related to mental illness and addiction. In FY18 we served over 105,000 persons at risk for or experiencing a serious mental health or substance use condition.

The DMHAS system of care is a public/private partnership delivering mental health and substance use disorder inpatient and outpatient services through our state-operated facilities and contracts with over 165 non-profit community-based agencies statewide. The DMHAS system of care includes 13 Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) and two distinct hospitals in Middletown; Connecticut Valley Hospital and Whiting Forensic Hospital.

The Department remains committed to its core mission of promoting wellness, preventing illness and strengthening a recovery-oriented system of care for people with serious psychiatric and substance use conditions. This budget maintains services to individuals who rely on the Department by annualizing funding in the Young Adult Services account for individuals aging out of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), providing caseload growth in the Home and Community-Based Services account for new placements for the Money Follows the Person program as well as supporting growth in the General Assistance Managed Care account for non-Medicaid reimbursable services for individuals eligible for Husky D. Additionally, the budget supports non-profit service providers by annualizing the FY 2019 one percent cost of living adjustments.

The Governor’s proposed budget for DMHAS will not only protect core services that are in place, including those services that are employed to effectively address the opioid crisis, but will also realign
resources to assure identified critical service system components are sufficiently funded. The budget funds the deficiency in Personal Services as well as repurposes unexpended funds from the Home and Community-Based Services, TBI Community Services, and General Assistance Managed Care accounts to address operational deficiencies in the Other Expenses, Workers’ Compensation Claims, and Professional Services accounts. In recent years, the Department has had to address these issues through the Finance Advisory Committee.

This budget aligns with the DMHAS mission and vision by continuing to focus funding on community services to advance our recovery-oriented system of care. The proposed budget realizes efficiencies by leveraging non-profit expertise by transferring certain DMHAS state-operated LMHA services to community non-profit provider operations without any loss of service capacity or compromising the quality of services.

Potential efficiencies for fiscal years 2020 and 2021 include privatizing 41 Young Adult residential beds currently operated in Hartford, Torrington, Portland and Bridgeport. DMHAS may also privatize 16 mental health inpatient beds currently located at Capital Region Mental Health Center in Hartford by purchasing 16 beds in the Greater Hartford community. Additionally, this budget converts state-operated transitional residential services in New Haven and the Danbury and Torrington components of the Western CT Mental Health Network LMHA to private operations. It is anticipated that restructuring efforts like those mentioned above would not impact existing service capacity and would result in savings of $5.0 million dollars when fully annualized.

DMHAS core services will be maintained and will continue to promote the overall health and wellness of persons with behavioral health needs through an integrated network of holistic, comprehensive, effective, and efficient mental health and substance use services and recovery supports that foster dignity, respect, and self-sufficiency. Our services and supports are culturally responsive, attentive to trauma, build on personal, family and community strengths, and focus on promoting each person’s recovery and full citizenship. Integral to all services and supports is an emphasis on prevention, identifying and managing risk, and promoting safety. Some examples of services that further this mission include inpatient and outpatient treatment programs, emergency services, medication monitoring and housing supports.

DMHAS will continue to evaluate our service system and respond to behavioral healthcare trends by using enhanced data analysis to inform decision making, evaluating state-operated and contracted services to maximize resources, promoting evidenced-based and best practices and by encouraging partnerships to achieve efficiencies in service delivery.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the Committee today. I will be happy to take any questions you may have at this time.

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