Governor’s Proposed Budget FY20-FY21
Appropriations Hearing
Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
Friday, March 1st, 2019

Good evening 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 to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services budget that will support our statewide effort to end homelessness in Connecticut.

My name is Sarah Fcx and I am the Director of Advocacy and Community Impact for the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness. I speak before you today, representing more than 100 member agencies across our state who are working to end homelessness.

Over the last few years homeless service providers across Connecticut have housed over 2,579 of our most vulnerable citizens. These individuals, who were housed as part of our state’s effort to end chronic homelessness (longtime homeless and disabled), are those that without housing and supports would languish on the streets. For these individuals, and many others in permanent supportive housing, the support services and case management provided by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) is a critical component in keeping them housed and stable. These services are funded from the Housing Supports and Services line item, which is maintained at $23 million in the Governor’s proposed budget.

Homeless service providers across the state are committed to ensuring that once an individual is housed through the Coordinated Access Network (CAN), the Connecticut Homeless Response System, every agency across the region would engage in a unified effort to ensure that that individual would remain stably housed and in the community. This commitment, coupled with the intensive supports provided through the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services case management, is a vital part of our effort and has led to a 99% success rate for keeping these vulnerable individuals in housing, or helping them transition to another permanent destination. This success means these individuals who once used expensive services, such as emergency rooms, first responders and costly medical care, are now accessing less costly community services and are leading healthier lives.

The case management and supportive services provided through DMHAS mean ongoing services for the most vulnerable clients while they transition from homelessness to housed. One of the most critical components of our CAN system is the collaboration between housing case managers and community providers. If an individual is decompensating, or needs more support to be successful in their housing, their case managers work with their CAN to problem-solve, determine if the client needs a higher level of care, and provide person-centered care to the individual to help them remain stably housed.

We ask that you maintain the critical support services for permanent supportive housing. Cuts to these services would risk reversing the substantial progress we have made to end
chronic homelessness. Cuts to these important services could mean increases in unsheltered, high-need homelessness – taking us the wrong direction, and imposing new costs on our communities. We know what works to end chronic homelessness: permanent supportive housing, which combines housing subsidy with case management services. Hundreds of research studies have demonstrated that this is not only the right thing to do to help a fellow citizen in need, but it is cost effective to the communities. Ending chronic homelessness by providing these supports is proven to save communities up to 70% of the costs they will otherwise incur when chronic homelessness persists.

Homelessness is an unacceptable condition for any Connecticut resident, and an expensive public policy problem. Investments in frontline homeless services, permanent supportive housing, and support services save public resources and help families and individuals transition to housing, stability, and hope.

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

Sincerely,

Sarah Fox
Director of Advocacy and Community Impact
CT Coalition to End Homelessness