TESTIMONY OF ELIZABETH HINES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY PARTNERS IN ACTION

IN SUPPORT OF:
EXPANDING MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT
IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
FEBRUARY 25, 2019

RE: HB 7148 "GOVERNOR’S PROPOSED BUDGET FY 20-21"

My name is Elizabeth Hines and I am the Executive Director for Community Partners in Action (CPA), an agency that has operated continuously in Connecticut for 144 years. CPA provides a myriad of services focused on behavior change and we strongly support reform and evidence-based practices in the juvenile and criminal justice system. We work with people who are transitioning from prison to the community; on probation or parole; and those who have cases pending in Court.

CPA is a longtime partner with the CT Department of Correction (DOC) and Court Support Services Division (CSSD). We operate a DOC Work Release Program in Hartford, CSSD Transitional Housing in Hartford and Waterbury, and CSSD Alternative in the Community Programs in Hartford, Manchester and Waterbury.

In addition, CPA operates the Resettlement Program, Prison Arts Program and oversees the Waterbury Reentry Center. CPA is also the lead agency for the Hartford Reentry Welcome Center which opened its doors in September, 2018.

Our staff is on the front line of reentry and have observed the devastating effects of opioid addiction on people when they come home from prison. CPA has created safe and secure environments for our participants; however, during the past few years we have witnessed approximately twenty overdoses, three of which resulted in death, in our Transitional Houses and Work Release Program.

The opioid crisis requires our programs to ensure staff are trained to recognize signs of potential overdose and to properly administer Narcan, a medication designed to rapidly reverse opioid overdose. Our Human Service Workers carry Narcan on their person at all times while on shift. All of the overdoses resulted in trauma for both the staff involved and residents who witnessed the events.

Once released from prison, many of the people CPA serves have to wait up to two months before they can get into a treatment program. This waiting puts people at high risk of recidivating, overdosing— or dying from an overdose.
CPA fully supports the Governor's proposed funding to expand the Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Program. MAT is an evidence-based practice that combines pharmacological interventions with substance abuse counseling and social support. MAT should be an essential part of the comprehensive array of services available to people who are incarcerated and struggling with addiction to alcohol or other drugs. MAT can reduce cravings and therefore allow people to focus on their successful reentry, thereby benefitting them and Connecticut as a whole.

Let's give people in prison the treatment they need and deserve so they can return home with a head start on a successful reentry that includes maintaining sobriety. Community Partners in Action strongly endorses HB 7148.