Good afternoon. Good afternoon, it’s still afternoon. I want to call the Appropriations, Conservation, and Development Subcommittee Public Hearing to order. Well, I was in for a celebration of the arts because I’m sure I’m going to hear a lot of arts tonight. We will start the hearing. Thank you everyone for being here. First for everybody’s information, we will have each person please make sure when you come up that you press the button in front and you see a little red button, the microphone lights up. Make sure that’s on and also make sure that you give your name first so that we can put it on record and then begin speaking. Everybody has three minutes for their speeches, okay? Thank you. So let’s start with Kiley Gosselin. Did I butcher that? Oh, good. Thank you. Push the button on the front. Okay.

KILEY GOSSELIN: Representative Walker, honorable members of the committee, thanks for having -- allowing me here today to testify. My name is Kiley Gosselin. I’m the executive director of the Partnership for Strong Communities here in Hartford. We’re a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy
organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding affordable housing and building strong communities in Connecticut. We also staff and manage the Reaching Home Campaign to end homelessness in Connecticut. I’m here to ask your support on three primary areas of funding tied to serving those experiencing homelessness and ending homeless. I won’t read through the testimony that I submitted in writing. I’ll hit some of the high level points and feel free to ask questions.

The first item is to support funding for the DOH housing and homelessness line item, it’s $79.4 million dollars for fiscal year 2020 and $84.8 million dollars for fiscal year 21. This large pocket of money under DOH serves a wide variety of critical programs and services that includes rapid re-housing and rental assistance programs. As our data collection capabilities continue to increase and expand, we’re getting better and better at targeting our service dollars in the most cost effective way possible and over the last ten years, we’ve had tremendous success in doing this and continue to use that money in a very cost-effective manner.

This funding allocation also includes the implementation of a new Medicaid-supportive housing benefit for high-cost, high-need individuals, so this is a critical thing for ending homelessness in Connecticut. We know that supportive housing is the -- permanent support of housing is the best solution for these high-need individuals. These are individuals that frequently cycle in and out of our most expensive systems of care, like emergency rooms and detox facilities, as well as inpatient hospitalizations, so allowing Medicaid to help cover
the cost of housing and supportive services for these individuals will help the state further in its effort to ending homelessness.

Item two; we’re also in support of the proposal to support the homeless youth item at $2.3 million dollars. This item provides funding for youth outreach services, crisis housing, and other supports and services to help youth transition into safe and stable outcomes. We know that youth experience homelessness in different ways from other populations and require different interventions and so it’s critical that we have this unique source of funding to help them equally.

The final two items, we support adding funding for the coordinated access network infrastructure into a new line item called homelessness supports. These were previously under the Community Investment Act. This is the front door to our homeless service system. It’s 2-1-1 in our coordinated access networks, so we want to support seeing that as a general fund permanent line item. Even as we end homelessness and reduce our numbers, we still that front door system to target our resources most effectively.

And finally, we support funds provided to reflect a 1 percent COLA for the homeless youth program in the housing and homelessness service items, so we’re getting closer and closer to ending homelessness and at this point, we have as many people coming into the systems as leaving and these resources will help us take a step further in getting close to achieving that end.
REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. The one that’s really relatively new, I think, is the high-cost Medicaid population.

KILEY GOSSELIN: Yeah.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And that one, it says it’s supposed to serve up to 850 people?

KILEY GOSSELIN: That’s correct.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Fantastic, okay.

KILEY GOSSELIN: That’s something that’s been -- pushing for for something like ten years, so we were really -- we were really thrilled to see it in the budget. This is a great way to stretch our dollars to really get a big bang for our buck since these are individuals that disproportionately use a large number of public services.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, and thank you for your testimony. Next --

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Wait, I have a question. I’m sorry.

KILEY GOSSELIN: Sure.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Under the Community Investment Act, the $2.5 million dollars that’s in the two years, that used to have separate line -- a separate fund and it’s the first time in here. Are you willing to have your funds subjected to a complete loss if the CIA funds are not any longer kept segregated?

KILEY GOSSELIN: Well, it’s my understanding what we’ve done is taken them out of CIA and put into a general fund line item, so yes, we understand that, just as it was with CIA that the funds are still
subject to being cut or unavailable in either location, however, we want this to reflect the fact that this is a permanent system that we need to have in place and if we’re going to strengthen 2-1-1 and continue to fine tune it, we want to make sure that this is a permanent state infrastructure that we need to support.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Okay, and I appreciate that, but I would be very concerned about putting this money over here and not have it segregated out. It’s very easy for it to become a general fund revenue source and not support any of these. It does not mean that you would any longer be supported on a regular basis, just be prepared, all right? Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Are there any other questions now? Thank you, have a good day. Kathy Flaherty. Hi, Kathy.

KATHY FLAHERTY: Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Kathy Flaherty. I’m the executive director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project, a co-chair of the Keep the Promise Coalition and a member of the steering committee of the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance and I present my testimony today on behalf of all those three organizations. Basically ditto to everything Kiley just said. I can make that pretty simple. I think really what I would like to emphasize is that Medicaid-supported housing benefit can be a true game changer in how we get to the point where, as we’re moving towards really ending homelessness, start doing more of the prevention side of things so that people don’t even
have to fall into the system to get the help to move back into housing. Let’s keep them where they are.

I would just like to say, you know, all the choices you’re going to make over the budget the next few weeks and during the session are going to be hard and I appreciate the challenges you’re going to face, but Connecticut has to be a state that provides opportunity to all if its residents and there’s a reason that housing is at the base of the pyramid of Maslow’s hierarchy because when someone can fulfill their basic need for shelter, they can reach their other goals. If you can’t keep a roof over your head, you just can’t, so I really appreciate the governor’s proposals in terms of the department of housing budget and I hope you find a way to keep those funds in. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Thank you for all your work, Kathy. You do a great job.

KATHY FLAHERTY: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Go ahead.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for your testimony. Just a quick question, I noticed in the homeless youth line item, it’s $2.3 million dollars and there’s 5,000 young people that are experiencing housing instability, but the wait list is really long. What are the options for these people who are not able to get the housing and they’re on the wait list?

KATHY FLAHERTY: I know that there are people following me testifying who are homeless youth service providers.
REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay, I’ll ask them that question, then.

KATHY FLAHERTY: I just think they would be better to address that than my hypotheses about what’s going on.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay, great, thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative -- Senator Osten

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much. So I don’t know if you were earlier when we were talking about the prison population and the number of people that are in the prison system that serve their entire sentence that are mentally ill and I don’t really see anything in any of this dealing with that population and I was wondering about your thoughts on what we should be doing. We have 35 to 40 percent of the inmate population is chronically mentally ill. Are we not recognizing that we’re incarcerating those that used to be in psychiatric institutions?

KATHY FLAHERTY: I appreciate that comment and that question because I think you’re absolutely right. There is no question that the failure to provide home and community-based services so that people can stay well in the community sometimes leads people to make choices which ends up with them getting involved with the criminal justice system where they really don’t belong, but I think the challenge and the reason why you’re not seeing he numbers reflected here is because the federal definition of homeless and homelessness is a very specific definition and one of the challenges that I’ve even faced as the executive director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project is when people are institutionalized
in a psychiatric hospital for a lengthy period of time. They no longer meet that federal definition of homelessness or -- and so that’s a conversation that a lot of us working on these issues have been working on.

How do you work around specific federal definitions to serve the people, some of the most marginalized, some of the most vulnerable people that we really ought to be serving, how do we work around that?

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Any other questions? Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

KATHY FLAHERTY: Thank you.


LORRAINE MARTINEZ-VELLAMY: Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, members of the committee, thank you so much for the opportunity to testify in support of funding of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. My name is Lorraine Martinez-Vellamy. I’m an attorney at the center doing fair lending and foreclosure prevention work and we’d like to first thank the governor for recommending funding for the 2020 budget and I’m just here to re-inform you and re-inform how we help homeowners in Connecticut keep their properties. We are the only private nonprofit in the state that provides pro bono legal assistance to homeowners in Connecticut. We work statewide all across the judicial districts in this state, representing homeowners that are in foreclosure.
Right now, about 17,000 homeowners are behind 90 days or more, which is considered seriously delinquent, on the mortgages or they’re currently in foreclosure, so we need foreclosure attorneys to do this work and to keep people in their homes. We also have the second highest seriously delinquent rate in the nation right now, so we are still suffering and we see that amidst the homeowners we meet with throughout the year, hundreds of them, and we do that via our work in the courthouse, in the volunteer advice tables, the attorney for the short-calendar program, working with housing counselors. We basically collaborate with anybody in this state that has their hand in foreclosure prevention work, including the Department of Banking. We both train and partner with these organizations to ensure that we’re leveraging our resources and that we’re spreading the new information about new loss mitigation programs, new mortgage servicing rules amongst the folks that are doing that work in the state.

So beyond collaborating, leverage our resources, we’re educating and training mediators, judicial department, the private bar turns to us very frequently to get updates on new changes in the mortgage servicing laws, and we work with counselors very often. We also work with government officials and legislators and your aids, such as yourself, so we’re just here to ask you to support our funding and to approve our funding so we can continue to do this work.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. The foreclosure mediation program, is that -- that’s in judiciary?

LORRAINE MARTINEZ-VELLAMY: Yes.
REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay. I just wanted to make sure. Now is that -- who is your executive director?

LORRAINE MARTINEZ-VELLAMY: My executive director will be following me very closely.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, well, whoever it is, please answer that question for me. That’s very important. Are there any other questions? Thank you for your testimony.

LORRAINE MARTINEZ-VELLAMY: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Next Stephen Coan and Tina Tison.

TINA TISON: Good afternoon, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, and all the members of the Appropriations Committee here this afternoon. We would like to thank you for your time and your continued support of the Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk, which I represent, and the Mystic Aquarium, which my co-speaker here today represents. Your support of these two organizations via the appropriations are vital to our organization and really vital to the economic engines that we represent. Collectively, we represent more than 1,700 jobs in the state of Connecticut. We draw more than 1.3 million visitors into our door every year and this collectively yields $150 million dollars into the state of Connecticut, so your investment -- your appropriations are in investment in that economic engine that we collectively bring to the state.

STEPHEN COAN: Thank you to members of the committee. On behalf of the Mystic Aquarium, we appreciate --
REP. WALKER (93RD): And your name sir?

STEPHEN COAN: Mystic Aquarium, I apologize, and just to add to the economic picture, a lot of our day-to-day work is conservation oriented and particularly around Long Island Sound. We are involved between the two institutions in every school district in the state of Connecticut, many districts in New York and Rhode Island as well, but in the state of Connecticut, we offer STEM learning programs at the K-12 level and both institutions are very involved in higher education as well, so we appreciate the support and thank you for the time tonight.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you both for your testimony and thank you for your institutions. The best part of it is listening to how you give back to the communities and to our kids. That’s the most important is the fact that you provide them with an opportunity to grow in a multitude of ways, so thank you for that. Senator Formica.

SEN. FORMICA (20TH): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good afternoon, welcome. Thank you for again all you do and, you know, as we grapple with, you know, trying to get these tourism dollars to us and arts and culture dollars to where we want to be, that statewide marketing dollar is critical. Are you finding the need for that? Are you generating new people as a result of the initiatives over the last few years?

STEPHEN COAN: Absolutely. Both institutions have benefitted from state marketing dollars and particularly from the New York market where a lot of the state advertising dollars were invested and that market, and the Boston market, which is also
critical to both institutions, is cost prohibitive in terms of advertising dollars for either of these institutions, so that -- a continued investment in the New York market and hopefully further investment in the Boston market is really critical to driving numbers -- to driving people into Connecticut for tourism and yes, we have seen the benefit over the years.

SEN. FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, and so you’re getting Boston to your spot, if they come, and you get New York to your spot? I know they have to drive by you to get to the other, so I mean, I think that’s pretty good -- it’s a pretty good indication that the dollars are working if you’re moving along that way.

STEPHEN COAN: Yes.

SEN. FORMICA (20TH): And I, too, thank you for everything that you provide, not only for the children, but for the community. You’re a big part of the communities that you serve, too, so thank you very much.

STEPHEN COAN: Thank you, Senator.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much and how much would you posit should be in the tourism dollars that would allow us to entertain real advertising in both the New York and the Boston markets? Do you have an idea?

STEPHEN COAN: Well, a number north of -- certainly north of $5 million dollars for direct advertising. When you look at the total investment right now, there’s a lot of pieces in that other than direct
advertising, so something north of $5 million dollars for media buys, for advertising is really important and it’s probably, you know, realistically in an ideal world, it would be somewhere around $10 million dollars would be the number I would suggest.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): So $5 million dollars per market or $5 million --

STEPHEN COAN: Total annually.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): -- total and ideally would be $10 million dollars?

STEPHEN COAN: Yes.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much.

STEPHEN COAN: For advertising.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Dillon.

REP. DILLON (92ND): Thank you. Thank you very much for coming. Norwalk, you’re -- what is the update? You’re moving, right? I worked on that project when I was -- when I worked -- I was the department head in that city, so I remember hours of working on the landfill and I’d heard that you were moving to a new location. Will that require some kind of help from the state in terms of letting people know there’s a new place?

TINA TISON: First of all, thank you for your help at the time that you were involved in the organization, we have just celebrated 30 years, so we continue to reap the benefits of your efforts. There are not plans to move the aquarium. We -- There is a train bridge that bisects the building that we reside in that is being repaired over the
course of the next handful of years, so we have some exhibits that are moving and we do have a plan change of our feeder that will change location, but the organization as a whole is not moving its location.

REP. DILLON (92ND): I wonder because I really want to respect everyone’s time, if you could provide that information just to know the details of how it would work. I was under the impression people might not know how to find you.

TINA TISON: Oh, okay.

REP. DILLON (92ND): But it sounds like it’s going to be great.

TINA TISON: No, we’ll be there for a while.

REP. DILLON (92ND): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Dathan.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much. I represent Norwalk and so we love the aquarium and thank you for all you do and thank you for the Mystic Aquarium, which I’ve heard is wonderful. We just are hooked on the Norwalk one. Thank you. My question was really about the young student programs and really wanted to understand about what percentage of our state schools going to both of your aquariums? The 300,000, are they based in Connecticut or are they coming from Massachusetts, as well, or Rhode Island?

TINA TISON: I can speak on behalf of the Norwalk location. The majority of the school children are from within the state. We do, though, because of our proximity to the New York border. We do see some districts from Westchester in particular visit,
but most of the field trips are from within Connecticut.

STEPHEN COAN: That would be true for us, as well. It’s probably 80 percent Connecticut.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay. And do the schools pay for their trips to come visit you or is that usually a free service that you provide?

STEPHEN COAN: For us, it’s a variety of options. Some schools pay, however, we have a lot of grant-funded initiatives, so in all of the -- all of the high-risk communities, we provide free access of some sort and programming into the districts.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Got it.

STEPHEN COAN: There’s not necessarily fee-based.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay, same in Norwalk?

TINA TISON: Very similar to ours, yes.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay. Thank you so much for your testimony. I appreciate it.

TINA TISON: You’re welcome. Thank you for your representation.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, too. Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Madam Chair. I don’t have a question. Good evening. As you all probably know, I’ve represented in Norwalk for a long time and I’m well aware of everything that you do on both the recreational and education fronts, the educational fronts particularly important, and I am certainly well aware of your situation with the
walk bridge, so I’m not going to ask you for any more details. I just want to say welcome and thank you for coming and I hope everybody can visit both the Mystic Aquarium and the bridge one of these days. Thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Have a good day. Next we have Erin Kemple and after Erin Kemple comes Richard Cho and I just want everybody, especially the members up here, to know that we have only another 40 more people, so we make sure that we can hear the audience, let’s be direct on our questions. You can wave later.

ERIN KEMPLE: Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and Senator Formica, my name is Erin Kemple. I’m the executive director of the Connecticut Fair Housing Center we’re statewide nonprofit that works on both housing, discrimination issues as well as foreclosure prevention issues. You’ve heard from my colleague, Lorraine Martinez, tonight and the answer to the question, our funding comes through the Department of Housing and is part of the Department of Housing’s budget, but that money is actually taken from the banking fund and given to the Department of Housing. My understanding is that the foreclosure mediation is funded in a similar way, but through the judiciary department.

I want to thank both the governor and the Department of Housing and this committee for funding the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. We receive $670,000 dollars each year, that more than 1,500 calls each year from people who think they’ve either been the victim of housing discrimination or in some way are facing foreclosure. We are seeing an increase in the number of people who are elderly
facing foreclosure as the result of reverse mortgages and those cases tend to take a lot more time than the more traditional foreclosures that we did, both because the transactions are more complicated and because the people who are involved in them may be impaired in some way or maybe have lack of understanding of what’s happening.

One of the programs we’ve started within the last year as a result of funding from the state of Connecticut is we’ve been looking at whether or not our inner cities and outer communities around the, particularly low income communities around the state, have the capital that they need in order to thrive. One of the things that we’re particularly concerned about is whether or not people are able to get the money that they need to make repairs to their homes to prevent blight and we’ve been looking at how lending is going on, residential lending is going on, within the state of Connecticut, trying to bring more resources into those low-income communities, whether it’s actual lending or bringing in bank branches or other financial institutions that will contribute to the community and not in any way do anything predatory to those communities.

With regards to housing discrimination, unfortunately it is still a significant issue in our state. One of the things that we have been able to do is assist the money follows the person program in moving people from nursing homes back into the community, which is a significant savings for the state of Connecticut. We would have worked with a lot of the communities of people who have been displaced from public and subsidized housing as a result of condemnation or the closing of that housing to prevent homelessness so that as you heard
earlier, people don’t have to go into the system or can go from one housing unit to hopefully a better unit that better suits their family.

So we are working with the state in many different ways, both to serve the community, but also to ensure that the state services are getting to the people that need them and I ask that you continue to support level funding for the center and I’m happy to answer any questions that you may have.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, according to your testimony, you have a new 1,000 new cases in discrimination?

ERIN KEMPLE: Every year, yes.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And of those 1,000 cases, how many -- I’m done. Of those 1,000 cases, approximately how many do you resolve in support of the person who files the discrimination?

ERIN KEMPLE: So with regards to the cases that we have, I would say that about 50 percent are resolved in favor of the person without ever having to involve any state agency or going to court or anything. We are able to work it out. Probably about 25 to 30 percent, there isn’t any merit or the client drops out and then approximately 15 to 25 percent actually have more work and may at some point end up in court or with a state agency.

REP. WALKER (93RD): How many in your staffing?

ERIN KEMPLE: We have 15 people on staff. About half of our staff works on foreclosure prevention and about half works on fair housing.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Questions? Thank you very much.
ERIN KEMPLE: Thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Next Richard Cho. After Richard Cho, Steven Sigel and after Steven Sigel, Scott Wilderman. How are you doing? Good to see you.

RICHARD CHO: Good evening, Senator Osten and Representative Walker and other members of the committee. Thank you for reading my testimony. I’m Richard Cho and I’m the chief executive officer for the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness and I’m here representing our approximately 100-member coalition of organizations working to achieve an end to homelessness in Connecticut. I’m sympathetic to the fact that this committee has to hear a lot of requests for resources and a lot of issues and problems that come before it and I would maybe ask the question, of all the problems that you hear about, how many are problems where you -- where people can say they know exactly what the solutions are, they know exactly how many of those solutions that they need, and they know what resource gaps that they have and how far they’ll be able to solve that problem with the resources are provided because that’s exactly where we are on the issue of homelessness in Connecticut today.

Over the past several years as you may have heard, we’ve made significant reforms to our response to homelessness. Just several years ago, if you were homeless, you had to navigate a dizzying maze of programs or apply to 20 different programs and be on 20 different waiting lists to get assistance. We now have a streamlined centralized front door through the states 2-1-1 system which connects to seven regional coordinated access networks that
helps people get the help they need matched to their local need. We also have now, you know, whereas people previously were stuck on long waiting lists for housing, we now have a range of different kinds of tools. Some people can be assisted with a limited amount of financial help, others need longer term assistance and so we were able to get more through our system.

And whereas before we would take our data and provide an annual report on what homelessness looks like, we now have real time data tracking that tells you on any given month how many people are homeless, how many we’ve been able to house, and how many new people are coming in to homelessness and those reforms have enabled us to achieve significant progress. You heard from acting commissioner Mike Santora and about the success we’ve had where we’ve driven homelessness down by 34 percent since 2012. We’ve achieved an effective end to veteran homelessness, we’ve reduced chronic homelessness by 62 percent, but we’re now at a place where, as any system that has achieved significant progress, it starts to get harder as you start to make progress. We’re now left with folks who have more significant needs in the homelessness service system and we continue to see a steady stream of people who are newly falling into homelessness and our resources right now, working with a maximum efficiency, we’re only able to keep up with new demand and not able to actually reduce our numbers.

Our statewide data for the month of February indicates that there’s about 1,900 households currently experiencing homelessness. The average episode of homelessness is 125 days. We’ve been able to exit 202 households from homelessness, but
another 293 have been identified as newly homeless, so simple math shows that if your outflow is smaller or equal to your inflow, you’ll never be able to reduce the number and that’s sort of where we are today. The request that the governor included in his budget we support because they are the resources that will help us to bend the curve further. In the written testimony, I submitted a graph that conceptually illustrates what we’re talking about here is that the resources provided in the governor’s budget will enable us to bend the curve on homelessness for families, individuals, and youth and if we work with further efficiency, and we also are able to leverage federal dollars so that we can bend the curve fully, so I will leave it there and open to any questions.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you for your testimony and I think you worked for the transition committee, didn’t you?

RICHARD CHO: I did.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yes, that’s right, yeah. Thank you for that work you did, too. Are there any questions? Yes, Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much and we talked a little bit earlier and I would like to know your opinion on homelessness amongst those that are not identified as either ID or DB or identified as having substance abuse, just that silo of people with mental illness. Do you have an opinion on where we are and where we should be?

RICHARD CHO: Yeah, I mean, we don’t have fantastic data that shows the prevalence of mental illness. One of the things that my agency does is we
administer the statewide homelessness management information system which gives us data on who has access to homelessness services and I think one of the most important things we can do is to match that data with other systems to really look at what’s the prevalence. We are -- have conducted a data match with the state’s Medicaid agency within DSS to determine which actually inform the Medicaid high-need, high-cost benefit that is included in this proposal, but in addition, that enables us to look at diagnoses. What we’re planning to do is to mine that data further to really look at what’s the prevalence of serious mental illness represented in the homeless population and I think we have an opportunity to look at how we’re using our resources so we can prioritize the subset of people with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness for permanent supportive housing and not make them have to wait long periods of time before getting assistance. I think it is absolutely a need and one that we’re working hard on trying to address.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): And is there any reason why we have someone who is in the silo of IDDD that we are not, or are we, maybe we already are, applying for -- helping them apply for Social Security disability when they’re 16 or 17 years old so that once they get to that 21-year-old time frame when they’re out of school that we could make sure that piece, that funding, is already in place for them?

RICHARD CHO: I don’t see any reason why we shouldn’t. I’m not necessarily an expert on Social Security administration rules. When I worked in the federal government, we did work on making sure that Social Security administration was responsive to the needs of people who were experiencing homelessness
or otherwise vulnerable to be able to navigate access to SSI/SSDI benefits. Young people probably don’t have the work history to qualify for Social Security disability income, but may be eligible for supplemental security income and one of the challenges, I think, with young people and as we’re looking into youth homelessness, we’re seeing this, there’s often a reluctance to diagnose them at that age with the kind of conditions that would mean that they’re considered disabled for the long-term, but I think it’s a gap that we can certainly look at and we’re happy to work with state agencies, as well as with our advocacy groups to look at that more closely.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you and have a good say. Thank you for your testimony. Steven Sigel? Is Scott Wilderman here? Scott? Okay, good.

STEVE SIGEL: Good evening, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I’m a resident of New London, a board member of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, and for the past 31 years, executive director of the Garde Art Center in southeast Connecticut. It’s a nonprofit regional center for the performing arts and education in downtown New London. The arts and culture sector represent about 5 percent of Connecticut’s economy, generates $9 billion dollars annually, and supports 57,000 jobs. When I was here two years ago to speak to you, it was to, once again, thank the legislature, thank the Appropriations Committee, for coming to our aid to protect and in the case of two years ago, to fight
against a further reduction of our current under-funded sector.

The legislature has done its best to protect what unfortunately has been a declining investment in an excessively under-funded economic catalyst, the arts. Arts appropriations currently comprise of a paltry 0.3, that’s 300th of 1 percent, of the entire state budget and has been cut 45 percent over the past four years. Happily, the governor’s proposed budget does not further cut the arts culture and tourism fund, however, the governor’s own arts culture and tourism transition committee, after thorough deliberation with many professionals in this sector, developed what we believe are the best policies for maximizing the economic impact of arts and tourism. Those recommendations include, by the way, changing the name of the tourism fund to the arts culture and tourism fund, reallocating existing lodging tax revenue that is deposited into a tourism fund from the current 10 percent to 25 percent, and of the funds in invested in that fund, allocate 30 percent for arts and arts-related investments and 60 percent for tourism related investments.

In his wisdom, the legislature has seen the benefit of direct support to the Garde and similar sister theaters throughout the state. These are on the urban catalyst performing arts centers provide a community owned cultural activity generator, and economic catalysts that really drives much of the economy and the quality of life in our cities. So we thank you for your support of those wonderful institutions and finally, I just want to say that we really ask you to protect and return arts funding to what it was ten years ago. Thank you.
REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Sigel for your testimony. I have one quick questions, one of the recommendation that some people had made, I don’t think it was from the transition committee, but they talked about just creating basically four grants and having all of you apply to the grants for funding. What do you believe -- Do you support that concept?

STEVE SIGEL: I think our focus is really on getting the corpus larger. I think the issue that the legislature has had with decreased funding is that when you start thinking about how you distribute less and less money, you’re engaged in a game of allocation that at the end minimizes the impact that any recipient has, so I can say that we’re all aligned in making sure that the institutions that are eligible and deserve funding should continue to do so, whether it’s a mix of line items and comparative grants, you know, we’re supportive of it all.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you your for testimony. Are there any questions? Senator Formica.

SEN. FORMICA (20TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Sigel. Thank you for coming. Thank you for your good work for what you do for downtown New London. Your comment about arts culture combination with tourism as a name change, I think, you know, we’re going to embrace that in the four years, five years now that we’ve had the bipartisan tourism caucus. It’s developed and got some legs and I think it makes sense to incorporate the arts and culture because that’s what people come for in tourism. I’m confused about your line item cuts
that you say. I think we’ve been increasing dollars over the last few years, so you’ve got to point me where we think those line items were for culture because I know I’ve worked with the arts and culture community to make sure the line item was there.

STEVE SIGEL: Absolutely, the legislature has done its best in ensuring that it maintains, but as my fellow colleagues can you tell you, it, you know, four years ago there was more investment in the arts and the line items that we had then were almost twice as what they are now.

SEN. FORMICA (20TH): All right, well, I will go back and do my homework because I don’t recall that, but, you know, I appreciate what you do and we’re going to work on it to make sure that you and those folks that are following today from, you know, the Palace and the Bushnell and all the other participants, you know, are important cogs in the cultural wheel that is Connecticut, so we want to make sure to keep you going. So thank you for coming up.

STEVE SIGEL: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much for coming up today. It’s very important to hear from you because I think people need to know exactly what you do and I think sometimes people get confused and are not really looking at the actual dollars and the impact that you have on quality of life in a very small city of New London, not very big at all, about 6 square miles, and I think that it’s important for us to keep you there and I’m really excited to get to visit your facility on a regular basis and I
think it’s really wonderful. Thank you for doing what you do.

STEVE SIGEL: Thank you, Senator.


WILLIAM CLARK: So good evening to Representative Walker and Senator Osten and the members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Dr. William Clark here from Career Resources.

REP. WALKER (93RD): I thought -- you look a little different.

WILLIAM CLARK: Well, in the interest of time and on his behalf, I want to give our testimony and wanted to bring one of our members of the program up from STRIVE, but we wanted to come up here to say thank you for supporting the governor’s budget. Because of your support of the program over the past 18 months, we’ve enrolled 78 job seekers, we’ve assisted 60 individuals to find employment, and we’ve helped 56 retain employment beyond 90 days and as you may know about STRIVE program, we serve a variety of individuals, but most notably individuals returning from incarceration, young people between the ages of 18 to 24, and anybody that desires to change their career trajectory. So again, we wanted to say thank you for supporting the governor’s budget that can allow us to leverage additional private funds from federal resources and private resources. I do want to yield some of my time to one of our members, Tyrone Robinson, who has been participating in the STRIVE program to share a piece of his story.
TYRONE ROBINSON: How are you doing? My name is Tyrone Robinson and I started STRIVE about seven, eight months ago and before that, I was recently released from incarceration, so I didn’t have a plan and whatnot, so I was kind of like all over the place, you could say, and when I finally joined STRIVE, things started getting done. I started seeing better results and, you know, I kind of got out of the funk of being released and not having, you know, much of a plan or anything, but throughout the program, I actually learned basic customer service for culinary actually because you get to choose, you know, what career you want to do and to sum some of this up, if it wasn’t for STRIVE, then I feel like I probably would still be struggling hard. You know, I have a daughter also, so I’m not just trying to feed myself or provide for me and STRIVE really gave me opportunity and a chance to show that, you know, despite my mistakes I made, I can still change and be somebody.

WILLIAM CLARK: So with that said, thank you for having us today and we’ll be glad to answer any questions you all have.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you and hi, Scott, because I saw him wave. Thank you for the testimony and I’m sorry, what was your name, sir?

WILLIAM CLARK: Dr. Clark.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Dr. Clark, okay, are you on the list here, too?

WILLIAM CLARK: Yes. You can just cross me off.

REP. WALKER (93RD): I just to make sure I keep up with who testifies, but thank you for coming and
STRIVE does do a fantastic job and can I ask, how old are you, sir?

TYRONE ROBINSON: Twenty-three.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Twenty-three, bless your heart, good. So college is on your forefront, right? That’s all I want to hear, college is on your forefront.

TYRONE ROBINSON: Yes.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you, guys, for what you do. Any questions? Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much and thank you for coming in, so on the STRIVE line item, it’s $76,000 dollars and what are you able to do with the $76,000 dollars -- was it not a little bit higher just about four years ago?

WILLIAM CLARK: Yeah, it was hard and one of the things we’ve successful in doing is leveraging those dollars to bring it together with federal and private dollars and what that -- when that was put in place, we were able to continue to support individuals like Tyrone with ongoing training, case management at the employment site, as well as stipends, so of course we’ll take more money, but we’ve figured out, you know, we can work together to leverage those resources as best we can.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): And Tyrone, you have a family and where do you work now? You have some culinary skills now?

TYRONE ROBINSON: Yes, currently I work at the Kitchen at Village Forge on Broad Street, that’s the Firebox.
SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Oh, okay. And my colleague next to me always wants people to go to college and I always want people to go into manufacturing because I think it can get you some real dollars and so we go back and forth.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You can get training in manufacturing at college, too.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Yeah. And I think that that sometimes gets you an opportunity to get what I term a living wage job, $25 dollars an hour, so having worked in the restaurant business a good portion of my life, I know it’s really hard and sometimes a return on investment is not there, so -- but if you love it, then you’ve got to stay, but, you know, you’ve got to figure it out, but I want to wish you all the best and I’m hoping that whatever trajectory you want to take that it’s what you want to take and that you’re going to come in here in five years and you’re going to tell us that this was the start of that, so thank you.

TYRONE ROBINSON: All right. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yes, Representative Horn.

REP. HORN (64TH): Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for being in particular. I’m really glad to see Tyrone here today. It really makes a difference to see and hear from the people who benefit directly from these programs and my question was, how did you become connected to STRIVE, how did you find out about it?

TYRONE ROBINSON: I actually went to parole and my parole officer had contacted the people from STRIVE and they were there doing interviews because they go
to the actual parole places and pick out people who they feel are worthy.

REP. HORN (64TH): Great. So from your perspective, there’s a reasonably systemic way to try to find people who would be appropriate for the program and get them into it?

WILLIAM CLARK: Yes, we utilize a number of platforms, of course parole and probation, as well as general publicity to let everyone know that STRIVE is available to them as well.

REP. HORN (64TH): Great. Thank you again for being here.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you, Representative Horn for asking that question and thank you, guys, for testifying. Thank you. Have a good day. Florence Villano and after Florence, Roshaud Hoskins. Is he? Okay. Good afternoon.

FLORENCE VILLANO: Good afternoon, Senator Osten and Representative Walker, and all the members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. My name is Florence Villano and I’m the executive director of the Connecticut Housing Coalition. The Connecticut Housing Coalition represents community-based affordable housing activity across the state and supports equity and opportunity by increasing the availability of affordable housing statewide. We are pleased to come here to testify in support of the line items that Kiley mentioned earlier for homelessness. We are also delighted to support the funding for Medicaid supportive housing. We think that’s incredibly important.
The concern that we have, though, is with the lack of bond funding for affordable housing. We think that in order to end homelessness and improve our economy, we need to have housing and affordable housing and right now, we’re at about 90,000 unit deficit in affordable housing, so we just feel it is incredibly important that bricks and mortar are part of the budget. We certainly support the services, but it’s like the third leg of the stool.

The other concern that we have is the CIA funding being put into the general fund. The CIA funds support housing, agriculture, open space, and historic preservation, all vital to the economy and it was funding source that was meant to be elevated above the line item competition. And so -- and it’s prorated, you know, because of budget problems and we understand that, but we hope that it would be returned to its rightful place. That’s the end of my remarks.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Could you define for me affordable housing, what income level are you talking about for affordable housing?

FLORENCE VILLANO: We’re talking about 30, 60, 50, 80; 30 percent AMI, low-moderate income.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay.

FLORENCE VILLANO: So we’re talking about very low to 80 percent would be considered at this point in time like moderate income almost.

REP. WALKER (93RD): It would be 40, 80 -- I’m sorry, 50, 50 would be moderate income?

FLORENCE VILLANO: No, 80.
REP. WALKER (93RD): Eighty would be moderate income?

FLORENCE VILLANO: Yeah.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thirty would be affordable --

FLORENCE VILLANO: Very low. Very low, low, and approaching moderate I guess is the answer.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And when you say 30, what is the federal poverty level for 30?

FLORENCE VILLANO: I don’t know that. I don’t have those figures, but I can send them to you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Hopefully before the night’s over will be able to tell us that because I think it’s --

FLORENCE VILLANO: It’s extremely low income.

REP. WALKER (93RD): I think we use words that mask things like affordable and -- why do you keep buzzing me? But when I think when you say -- people say 100 percent federal poverty level, people really need to hear the amount of salaries that people have to make in order to qualify for some of the things that we have because we really don’t realize how many people are at that level and how important it is for them to get support, so I’d like to take away the mask and bring it out to the people.

FLORENCE VILLANO: Put the numbers in.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yeah, correct. Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Representative Dillon and then Senator Osten.

REP. DILLON (92ND): Thank you very much. It’s good to see you. I’m trying to make sense of some of the
things I’m hearing and I really appreciate the questions about the dollar amount because affordable housing means different things. It means different things not just in terms of money, but in terms of whether it’s kind of a red flag or not. I would really -- I don’t want to talk about revenue or bonding, we can’t, but when you’re talking about the issues involving scarcity of affordable housing, which we hear about a lot, are you including in that availability of land? That is, do you have the land to build on or is there an issue there as well?

FLORENCE VILLANO: There is not an issue, you know, one of the ways to address affordable housing is to, you know, add density, but you know, there is still land available, so that’s not the issue. It’s sometimes a lack of desire to have affordable in a community.

REP. DILLON (92ND): We know that. We actually spent a fair amount of time on that last year and it came up again in a neighboring town in the fall near us, so it just keeps jumping right out. But I know that our ability -- the legislature’s individual agency involving the transferring of was severely limited by an amendment to the constitution and that -- the last thing I was able to get before that happened was a slice of land from the DOT that would -- that is being used for affordable housing, so it may well be that we include the density in some areas and kind of pack people in and then allow other people to have acres of open space. I don’t know if that’s wise, but I love like regional planning and I don’t think -- I like a blue plan, you know, for water being applied to other things, but I don’t know if that’s going to happen.
FLORENCE VILLANO:  Well, we, you know, by no stretch of the imagination do I suggest that we want to pack people in. What we’re looking for is quality affordable housing and in some areas it’s density, in some areas it can be scattered sites, so it doesn’t -- it doesn’t have to be large developments. And there’s also the need to renovate existing properties where a lot of low-income residents reside that are far from safe and healthy.

REP. HORN (64TH):  Thank you, well, I appreciate, you know, if you -- when you’re responding to Representative Walker’s question, if the rest of us could have availability to that.

FLORENCE VILLANO:  Sure.

REP. HORN (64TH):  Because I think it is helpful to see the numbers.

REP. WALKER (93RD):  Thank you. Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH):  All right. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. So my question revolves around the Community Investment Act. I’m really concerned that the Community Investment Act has been succumbed into the general fund and I’m really concerned that eventually it will just be a part of the general fund and not support the programs. The idea was to dedicate these funds. Yes, there have been sweeps, we all understand that, I get it. I don’t like sweeping out of the Community Investment Act ever, but here we are today, but I really think that putting it in the general fund puts all of these programs at complete risk and I, you know, I see that you brought that up in your testimony is that’s your position also?
FLORENCE VILLANO: Yes, you know, originally Reaching Home had asked to put those, the CANS and the 2-1-1 programs into the general budget because they are not going away and I think by right, they should be, you know, the governor chose to do it another way and we are concerned and we’re concerned for housing, but we’re concerned about the other areas as well because that funding is important.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and just I love the Internet and stuff. People very quick to send me the guidelines for federal housing, so I appreciate that, but just to let everybody know, an individual poverty level at 100 percent is someone who earns $12,000 dollars, so $30,000 dollars is high, so thank you very much for your testimony. I’m sorry, Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Madam Chair.
Thank you for your testimony. Just because this was just brought up, do you see any -- is there any perceived advantage in your view to this transfer of the Community Investment Act funds into the general fund?

FLORENCE VILLANO: I -- Our -- The position of the coalition is that should stay at the appropriate line item. At, you know, we want it -- We just -- We want to make sure that the things that housing needs housing gets and so that’s a concern, as Senator Osten said, that the money might end up be succumbed.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Right. I’m just trying to understand why that -- why move it and I haven’t yet. All right, thank you very much.
FLORENCE VILLANO: Thank you

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Have a good day, thank you. Next is Rashaud Hoskins and I want everybody to know in one hour, we did ten people and we only have 30 more to go. Thank you.

MARKUS CHERRY: Good evening, everyone.

REP. WALKER (93RD): No, try it again. Press the button. Thank you.

MARKUS CHERRY: Sorry about that.

REP. WALKER (93RD): That’s okay.

MARKUS CHERRY: Good evening, everyone. My name is Markus Cherry, program director of STRIVE Connecticut. I come in the place of Rashaud Hoskins who is a participant and graduate of STRIVE. He was unable to make it today because he just found out that his girlfriend was having twins so he had to rush off to the hospital, so good news for him, but I sit in his place and hopefully I can fill those shoes, right? But upon learning that I was becoming a director of STRIVE Connecticut, it was important that I leverage my experience as case manager, as trainer, as well as program coordinator as a way to effectively carry out my duties as program director and with having experience at all levels of STRIVE, I’ve been able to see how STRIVE has impacted the community.

And our impact has been known in a variety -- has been noticed in a variety of ways. We’ve been able to do things like prepare workforce to attain and maintain a sustainable wage. We’ve noticed a reduce in recidivism, as well as creating a new community taxpayer and it was important to me because I,
myself, have experienced incarceration and I know what it feels like to go through that experience and learning about STRIVE, I’m confident if I would have had a program like STRIVE early on, I would have been able to drastically propel my career trajectory.

However, since securing employment with STRIVE, which is a program of career resources, I’ve found that they’re a second chance organization and I’ve been able to find a brand new meaning and purpose in the work that I’ve been able to do. And I’m confident that I’m living proof that a person given an opportunity or a second chance is able to really significantly impact the community in the fact that there’s progressive opportunity to grow and I brought with me today another graduate of STRIVE, Alijah, who is going to share a bit of a story as well.

ALIJAH ROMAN: Hello. My name is Alijah Roman. I started STRIVE about five, six months ago. Before STRIVE, I was just the average teenage girl. I liked hanging out with my friends, but I had nothing. I kind of felt lost. I was in need to pay fees for college and I didn’t start any new classes until it was paid. I was in the library one day and I heard about STRIVE and read that they could offer me job training in culinary, which is something I’m very passionate about. Once I started STRIVE, they taught me things like leadership skills, how to become a leader and what makes a leader, communication skills. STRIVE has also helped me build the confidence to speak to you guys today. Believe or not, I’m very quiet, shy. I don’t really do public speaking, but with the experience I gained, now I have a SerSafe certified certificate,
I have a certificate for completing the customer service in culinary training for Billings Forge. I am currently still working as the assistant baker for the kitchen at Billings Forge and I’m waiting to hear back from other bakeries where I can have a permanent full-time job and also, I’ve saved enough to go back to college and I’m planning on transferring to MTC. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and you did a fabulous job. I like the Kitchen. You’re at the Kitchen?

ALIJAH ROMAN: Yes.

REP. WALKER (93RD): They have a great curry chicken salad, but thank you for your testimony. You did a fantastic job and I’m sorry, your name again, sir?

MARKUS CHERRY: Markus Cherry.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Markus Cherry, okay, I’m just trying to keep up because you guys are playing chess on my board here, but thank you for your testimony and thank you for your commitment. Questions from the committee? Questions? Thank you.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Just a very quick question. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for coming. You did a wonderful job. You talked about graduating from the program, how long is the program from start to finish?

ALIJAH ROMAN: It’s about three months.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay. And what does it mean when you graduate? Do you -- I mean, do you have to attain certain courses or what is it, how do they determine that you’re ready to graduate?
ALIJAH ROMAN: Well, we did the training program and they taught us the basics of culinary and they provided us with things like financial classes to help us financially and with the experience that we gain from the program in culinary, they give us the certificate for the program and we take courses online for the SerSafe certificate.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): And then you’re done with that and you graduate?

ALIJAH ROMAN: Yes.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay. So maybe everybody has a different length of time before they graduate?

ALIJAH ROMAN: Right.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Well, good. Good luck at MTC. That’s one in my district. I really think it’s a wonderful program. Good luck to you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Yes.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Thank you, Madam Chair, and maybe I missed this, hi, thank you, wonderful testimony. How many people does STRIVE serve a year?

MARKUS CHERRY: So STRIVE over the last year, we’ve been able to serve about 78 individuals. We’ve gotten I want to say maybe about 60 of those graduated and about 50 of those individuals were able to secure employment.

REP. GILCHREST (18TH): Great, thank you. Thanks for what you’re doing.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you and thank you for your
Great job, Scott, you did well. Next up, what do you call it, the presenting theaters, you know, Frank, David, Michael, John. How are you doing? Good afternoon, still.

DAVID FAY: Yes, how are you? It’s great to see you again. We go back a long way.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yes, we do.

DAVID FAY: Representative Walker, Senator Osten, and everybody else on the committee. We really do second the motion that our friend Steven made that over a number of years, you have fought very hard on behalf of retaining some modicum level of funding and actually done amazing work for us and on our behalf and our communities and so we really are here because you’re here and we will come out on a cold night to say our thank you and to respect the work that you do. I have to say, one of the things about -- I look forward to this because sitting and listening to everything else that’s going on in this state is a real humbling thing for those of us who work in the arts. We fear the challenges that everybody faces, finding a home, you know, getting off the streets, finding affordable housing however that is defined.

But we also know that culture and art are truly -- they are not a luxury. They’re an essential part of living, they’re essential part of being a human being, they are essential in really the full development of a person and we see that in our theaters every day when we have shows, all different kinds of things, the various education programs that you are very well aware of, and they way that we’re able to touch people’s lives. We just had an amazing experience.
I’ll just tell you that a woman in her early 60’s passed away recently who her family always in the theater, I mean, their entire lives, and half of the obituary was dedicated to the Bushnell and the involvement and the engagement that they have, you know, with our theater and I know this is true of my colleagues as well, that that kind of involvement engagement does shape our human existence, so we really thank you for the support that you continue to provide to us and I’ll shut up for a second if somebody else wants to say something.

JOHN FISHER: Just thank you. You have our testimony and I think most of you know what we do and again, John Fisher on behalf of the Shubert and all my colleagues here, we do want to thank you and encourage our continued support in that for everything we do and for all the things you do for Connecticut.

MICHAEL MORAN: Just to expand on what David had to say in regard to what we do in our communities, I think that all great communities have some certain things, hospitals, houses of worship, school systems, and arts and culture. Arts and culture really I think make good communities great communities, so I applaud what my colleagues do every day. It’s not always glorious, but it certainly is rewarding. I also want to point out that we do stimulate other organizations in our cities and towns, as well.

We provide the opportunity for a lot of other not for profits to come in and use these facilities so they can raise funds for their organizations. Some of the people that use the Palace in Stamford are the Boys and Girls Club, Stamford Education for
Autism, charities, all very worthwhile organizations doing great social service work in our communities and without our resources available to them, they wouldn’t be able to do what they do and I think that one of the things that Steven Sigel pointed out with regard to protecting the funding was not always that the funding wasn’t there in the line items, but there were recessions made against it and when we make budgets a week in April or so, we plan for that July 1 to June 30 fiscal year and then those cuts get made and we scramble to do what it is that we do.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Do you want to at least give our name?

FRANK TAVERA: Yeah, it’s Frank Tavera with the Palace Theater, Waterbury, Connecticut. I want to say thank you for your support for all we do in our urban communities. Without your support, much of what we accomplish, the children that we impact, the lives we entertain would not be feasible, so thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you guys all for what you do. I think I saw John this past weekend and we had a thing in New Haven for the arts and my belief is that the arts is the eyes and the soul of our society and it’s very important that we maintain that because we have to look in the mirror and you guys make us look in the mirror with the presentations that you provide for us and what you do for the community is fantastic, so I’m going to ask each one of you in 30 seconds or less, can you do this, just tell me a little bit about type of educational, besides having the Boys and Girls Club, part of it was some sort of educational format that
you’re supposed to be doing in the areas, just give us a quick snippet on what you’re doing now.

FRANK TAVERA: Okay, I will go. We just had Legally Blonde in our building. We had 45 school children in the space. They did a six-week after school program which they had to volunteer to come to see – to come to events twice a week within the theater. They learned about social issues. They learned about the glass ceiling and how being a woman does not prevent you from being an attorney. They met male nurses, they met Alderman Stephanie Cummings to come through here as well. It was an opportunity for them to understand that the theatrical presentation that they were seeing did make -- and resonated with their own lives and inspired them to do better things in them and that’s one of the things we do on a regular basis at the Palace.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you.

DAVID FAY: Well, we just had the little show called Hamilton.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yeah, the governor has talked about that a bunch.

DAVID FAY: And we like that and as you may know, I know some of you do know, we worked with the show, on the Thursday of the first week, we did a matinee performance of the show that was strictly for Title One school children, 2,700 kids from all over the state and actually up from Massachusetts and a few out of New York state came in to see the show, but the deal was, they spent about six weeks on a curriculum leading up to it, where they studied not only the arts and everything that goes into making that show, but they really studied the Constitution,
they gained an understanding of what that show is about, and they created wraps and performances themselves, which then they came to the theater in the morning and they met with the cast and they performed some of their work for their fellow, you know, kids and everything else and then they saw the full performance and an extraordinary life-changing experience. If you want to see something about it, go to our website and click on mission moments and there’s about a two-minute video that shows you how that went -- how that happened.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Fantastic.

MICHAEL MORAN: We’ve got about seven or eight programs that we’re running right now from the Triple Threat/Performer Intensive where we bring in a teaching artist from New York City and we work with kids for two weeks on singing, acting, and dancing. At the end of the week, they come in and they do a performance or a scene from a show for their parents. It can be a real emotional moment when a child sings something to his mother that his mother had no idea he was feeling. We do also bring kids into see some of the shows. We did The Very Hungry Caterpillar recently, which is a lot of elementary schools work on that book and so we gave them, a lot of Title I, eight schools, the opportunity to come in and see that show at no cost to them and a playwriting workshop, where every year we get these kids -- we’ve got 23 kids working on a one-act play this year. We’re going to hire a director from New York and actually get these kids to perform the play in front of their parents and they’re colleagues, so we’ve got some other programs, too, I don’t want to steal John’s thunder, but education is extremely important to us, so much
so that we recently got a grant and we’re actually creating a strategic plan specific to the education department.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. John?

JOHN FISHER: Thank you. Yes, we’re heavily embedded in the coop arts magnate high school. We have two staff that work there full time and work with them extensively with a partnership with the board of ed, including heavily in the LGBT community and we also have summer camp middle school students that we work with, a lot of them are on scholarship, that covers the entire shoreline as well as New Haven and number of other programs involving our education fairly extensive. We’re really proud of our partnership with board of ed and with coop arts magnate school.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you all because I know the most important thing is getting our kids to get that spark and you guys are giving them the opportunity. Senator Hartley.

SEN. HARTLEY (15TH): Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that we’re on the clock and I want to thank all of you for the work that you do, and of course, I’m just going to do a little shout out there to the Waterbury Palace, so Frank, I happen to be right next door during that event the kids were all coming over to the stops with their parents. We were having office hours there so we got to talk to a lot of them. Would have loved to participate, but nonetheless, that the mural, your working relationship with the magnate school, which is a school that brings in students not only from Waterbury, but from the surrounding areas, and so it’s an understatement to say the arts define a
community because clearly they do and they are such an integral part of the economic arising as well as the culture and the quality of life in communities, so thank you. It’s important. We need to continue to raise the bar in regard to the arts. Thank you, Madam Chair.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, gentlemen. Thank you very much. Have a good evening. Next we have Chelsea Ross followed by Nicole Hampton. Is Nicole Hampton here? Is Nicole Hampton here? Okay, then Sarah Fox. I saw Sarah. She was right over there. Go right ahead.

CHELSEA ROSS: Good evening, Representative Walker, Senator Osten, and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Chelsea Ross. I’m the New England associate director for the Corporation for Supportive Housing, also known as CSH. Thank you for hearing my testimony in support of all the imperative investments made through the Department of Housing. CHS’ goal is to ensure that communities are equipped to create and operate high quality supportive housing. We’re also key partners in the statewide Reaching Home and Home Connecticut Campaign to create affordable housing and prevent and end homelessness in the state.

As you’ve heard this evening, Connecticut is a known leader in efforts to successfully address and prevent long-term homelessness. The governor’s proposed budget provides critical funding via the DOH homeless services line item to help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy, and dignity. This funding is crucial to enable the state to deliver on its responsibility to end chronic homelessness. The
budget preserves funding for the rental assistance program, also known as RAP, an essential resource to aid --

REP. WALKER (93RD): Excuse me, Chelsea, just one second. Any extra conversations, please take outside your chamber so we can hear the young lady’s testimony. Thank you.

CHELSEA ROSS: Thank you for calling me young.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Is she 15, is she 16?

CHELSEA ROSS: I am the mother of two beautiful children and I’m not 16.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay.

CHELSEA ROSS: Okay, so to help people who face the most complex challenges to live with stability, autonomy, and dignity and this funding is crucial to enable the state to deliver on its responsibility to end chronic homelessness. The budget preserves the RAP funding, which is an essential resource to aid households who have fallen into homelessness, as well as individuals who will transition out of institutional care by pairing RAP assistance with housing and house stabilization services, individuals and families return to the community quickly, improving their quality of life while reducing their use of costly crisis and institutional settings. The line item also includes a vital investment in the implementation of a Medicaid supportive housing benefit for high-cost, high-need individuals.

This benefit will provide extremely important community integration and tentatively sustaining supports for up to -- and whose average Medicaid
costs exceed $40,000 dollars per year. This small group disproportionately contributes to rising public spending on healthcare while continuing to experience poor outcomes. The individualized service covered by the benefit supports tenants in achieving sustained successful tenant fee varying in type, intensity, and duration based on tenants unique needs. By providing these tenant-sustaining supports, the benefit is expected to result in a 40 percent reduction in the Medicaid costs for these individuals that’s estimated at upwards of $4 million dollars after funding, housing, and services and will also result in improved outcomes for their health and personal satisfaction.

The net gain to those we serve, our communities, and to our state is clear. It costs us more in financial and human capital to allow individuals to languish in costly systems than it does to invest in their wellbeing in our communities. Emergency medical services, substance use treatment, shelters, and jails become labyrinths where people without adequate access to housing and preventative services move from one dead end to another in a cycle of perpetual crisis. We have an opportunity at the state to invest our resources in stable foundations. Thank you for considering my testimony. Thank you for your commitment to ensuring that those with the greatest needs in our state have a place in our community and the support they need to thrive.

RAPHAEI PODOLSKY: Thank you, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Raphael Podolsky. I’m a lawyer with Connecticut Legal Services and I’m here on behalf of the legal aid programs. As a general statement, I want to say that on the appropriations side of the housing budget, we’re very pleased with what’s there. The bonding side raises some other questions for a different committee. There are three specific things I want to talk to you about very briefly. They were in my written testimony. One is something that’s carried over from year to year, which is the moderate rental public housing program. We have sort of peculiar system where the housing authority, if they have state funding, family public housing is supposed to pay -- make payments in lieu of taxes to the town. It used to be funded by the state a few years ago. The budget -- It was removed from the budget. The tenant -- Of course, tenants would have faced huge rent increases because there’s no operating subsidy. The result is what this committee has done in the past is to say if there’s no state funding, then that charge cannot be made against the housing authorities. It really protects the towns, about 16 towns. You’ve been doing it incrementally, so it expires June 30th. We would like to see that provision made permanent. That’s our moratorium on those payments unless you start refunding the program or at the very least, be sure to extend it. It would be nice to get it to where you didn’t have to come back year after year.

The second thing I want to mention is I ask you to take a look within the framework of the rental assistance program of possibly encouraging a small PILOT program that would allow people who are in the
school choice program to have an opportunity to get a rental assistance certificate to help them actually live in the town where their kids are going to school. We think there is a number of people who would take advantage of that and if it runs a PILOT to see what extent there’s demand, it actually allows us to learn something very useful about that relationship. The reason you have a court case like Sheff versus O’Neill is because you end up with segregated schools because the housing itself is segregated as you break -- as the housing patterns change, you also up more diversity in those communities.

And finally, the -- I just want to say that we’ve tremendous gains in dealing with homelessness. Homelessness tends to be looked at from the point of view of people who are in shelters or who are out of housing and are in desperate need. One way you ultimately in the long-term are able to reduce homelessness is by preventing it in the first place and some of that looks -- means taking a look at some of the supporting programs which are in the housing homelessness line that are designed to prevent the loss of housing for people who have it or you move them into other housing without having to go through a shelter system, so for example, the eviction prevention program, which has things like a rent bank or the security deposit guarantee program, are all very helpful.

It is very good that those programs have been made available for people who are in shelters, but I think we may be at a point where you want to make sure there’s enough funding in those programs so that they can be used on a broader basis for people who are poor, who are on the rental assistance
waiting list, but would in the end function as homelessness -- function as a form of homelessness prevent. Thank you very much. Be happy to answer any questions if there are any.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, Raphie. Could you just go over the moderate rental public housing PILOT program one more time?

RAPHAEL PODOLSKY: There are two kinds of -- some -- a lot of the public housing in Connecticut was federally assisted, but a very significant part was state assisted. Some of it is elderly, some of it is family. In that category of family state-assisted public housing, which is in 16 towns, there is no operating subsidy. The rent structure is such that you pay a base rent or a percentage of your income. If it doesn’t -- If the system doesn’t generate enough money for the housing authorities to meet its bills, it has to raise the base rents and those base rents are what the poorest people in that housing pays. Housing authorities are tax exempt, yet they have to pay under the statute if it’s family public housing, they have to pay a PILOT to the town, so the structure here is that the pass-through money for the state was discontinued. That means the housing authority has to find it somewhere. To find it, it has to raise the rents. That’s what you suspend if you put a moratorium on that, essentially at the same time you defunded the state portion of that program and I think the theory at the time was it was really built into other payments that the state was making to the towns.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, so that’s House Bill 7228? Yeah, that’s what you’re testifying about.
RAPHAEL PODOLSKY: Yea, that’s right, 7228, right, it’s the bill that would make that permanent.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay. Could you later on send us the 16 towns that are affected by this?

RAPHAEL PODOLSKY: Yes, sure.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Are there any questions? Thank you, Raphie.

RAPHAEL PODOLSKY: Thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Sarah Fox?

SARAH FOX: Thank you, Representative Walker, Senator Osten. I’m here today to speak about the importance and just to provide some more input regarding the $2.48 million dollars that we’re looking to become the homeless supports line item and to just provide a little bit of clarify as we wanted. It had this line item, which it would really be a symbolic move to annualize the line item and to make it -- and to recognize the hard work of the coordinated access networks in providing support. We have been sort of -- We’ve been -- The funding for our CANS and our coordinated access networks, which was our front to homeless services, has been in the CIA, Community Investment Act funding, for about three and a half years.

When we first started the CANS in 2014, we, you know, it was sort of we had to do it, it was a federal ruling, but we didn’t exactly know, you know, that we were building a system and a system that would work that would be efficient, that would help to meet the needs of our homeless families use and individuals and today, you know, we’re pushing to get this to be a line item that comes back every
year that’s not at the whims of being swept. We do understand, you know, we want the CIA funds to be available for affordable housing, for other really important housing supports, but having an annual fund in a line item for homeless supports would make sure that our CANS and every single homeless provider that’s working tirelessly day after day has the resources they need to participate in this coordinated effort.

And it’s the coordinated effort that works in every single community across the state and when I first started in 2011 in homeless services, people were literally dying on the streets and there wasn’t coordination and a family could come back 20 times and we’d never know. Today we have data, we have a front door to our services through 2-1-1. We saw over 76,000 come through that front door last year. Our CANS have appointments and we over 16,000 appointments across the state and we’re meeting the needs in a way that we never have before and I think this investment is working and we want to have it so it’s something that recognizes the hard work, but it’s also, you know, it’s a system that’s working and it’s a human service system that’s providing services to our most vulnerable and that’s why it’s so critical.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. That was a mouthful. Thank you very much. Yes, Representative Santiago.

REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): Hello. So this line item, I see that it supports 2-1-1 and the CANS, so if you’re going to the CANS, can you elaborate as to the framework of the CANS? Is it the various agencies that come together and let’s say you talk
to one, one gets a call from somebody who needs housing services and would they get directed to the coordinated access network from 2-1-1?

SARAH FOX: So if a family or an individual is in a housing crisis, they call 2-1-1 and if they are going to be -- for a family, the state has pledged that there will be no unsheltered families ever again in Connecticut, so that is a pledge that every family provider across the state through the Reaching Home Campaign made. When a family calls or an individual calls, they get a light touch diversion screen and so when I say that, I mean they are -- a housing specialist at 2-1-1 is working to help that family identify any other options. If they don’t have any other options, family -- we have an urgent call line and I think this gets to Representative Walker, to some of your concerns about families who might be turned away through the system.

We now have urgent, so those families who might be literally homeless tonight, they are being seen that day or the next day and we’re making sure that they have shelter or a triage site in their community immediately. For others in housing crises, they are getting in for appointments with our housing specialists in the coordinated access networks and they’re having conversations again. So for families, we know it’s especially traumatic for families to come into shelter and that it’s very hard and difficult on children’s mental health and for any individual, so we want to keep people out of shelter if they have any other resources and tap them into their natural supports. When people are in crisis, they’re often not thinking about, you know, okay, so all the things that led them have
other supports that they’re not thinking about in that moment, so we work to divert people from coming into our system, which is just problem-solving, and then if they have no other place to go, we bring them into shelter. Our shelter capacity, we have scarce means and every dollar means something to our system and we have limited shelter space, so we divert everyone we possibly can.

For those we get into shelter or who we identify through Outreach, we get them on our by-name list, which is a list of every person who needs a housing resource within the state and then we work to provide them housing supports that meet their need and it’s coordinated in every single service region. So that’s how we’ve made so many strides and that’s why our system is so important because we’re provided targeted supports to people where they need them. We have a system in place from the front door to housing and every dollar that you invest in our system is making our community stronger. I -- And I’ll just share this briefly, my mom lives in permanent supportive housing.

I was homeless as a child, but having my mom housed and when she was homeless, it was the most traumatic thing I have ever lived through. You know, it was, I, you know, I well up because it was just so hard every single day. I would not be who I am today, I would not work where I work today, I wouldn’t the person or had the opportunities had my mom remained homeless because you can’t function, you can’t think, and you have that fear every day, so everybody that we’re housing through this system, every family that we’re supporting, we’re saving the lives of their families, we’re helping make our
community stronger, so I’m very committed to this system of care.

REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): Thank you. Now with regards to the coordinated access network, I’m just trying to have a better understanding of what that is, is that a group of agencies that come together?

SARAH FOX: So every single agency in every single community that’s touching the homeless response system, so it’s every federal dollar that’s coming in, every state dollar for homelessness resources, and every single provider are working to do -- better our collaboration with police and first responders, but we work closely with the Reaching Home Campaign. We’re working -- it’s a network of support for individuals experiencing homelessness and we have case conferencing which is of every organization across the entire coordinated access region, so if you’re in Fairfield County, so for all of Fairfield County, every single provider is closely connected, but that expands beyond just Fairfield County to the entire state, so CCH actually runs the homelessness management information system and through that system, you know, we have by-name list of every person experiencing homelessness and we also have a way for if a person is homeless in Fairfield County but then they, you know, they for some reason show up in New London, we have an ability to talk about that person, to understand their episodes of homelessness, to understand how many times they touched our system, and what supports they’ve needed and what supports they need today. And so -- And that is a statewide coordinated system that is something that we never had before and it’s a system that works.
REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): So it’s a statewide coordinated system. Is there just one network or are they by regions?

SARAH FOX: So there are seven regions. We have eastern Connecticut, which is now the northern part, it’s like Willimantic, Wyndham, and then we have the southeastern part, but they’re all the eastern region. We have Fairfield County, we have greater New Haven, we have Meriden, Middlesex, Wallingford, we have Waterbury, Litchfield and have central and we have greater Hartford CANS, so we have seven coordinated regions and then we have two federal funding regions, as well, Fairfield County and then the balance of state takes up the rest of it.

REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): Great, thank you for answering my questions. Thank you, Madam Chair.


LIZ HALLA-MATTINGLY: Hi. 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 through the Department of Housing to supports efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut. My name is Liz Halla-Mattingly. I’m a graduate student at the UConn School of Social Work and an intern at Chrysalis Center in Hartford. Chrysalis Center provides supportive services to assist people in need to
transform their lives. We serve those living in poverty, veterans, women and children, young adults, and individuals struggling with mental health, addiction, HIV/AIDS, homelessness, and those returning from incarceration.

Chrysalis Center is currently providing services to the individuals living in over 600 supportive housing units across the state of Connecticut. Our community supportive housing programs follow the Housing First Model, which has been shown to significantly reduce the number of individuals considered chronically homeless. By using Housing First, our clients can live independently in housing that is safe, stable, and affordable. Only once housing is in place do clients have the ability to address substance abuse, mental health, or other challenges they may have and unable to work on while homeless. Additionally, Chrysalis Center provides wraparound services, which is vitally important for clients. When people have a system of support and become members of the community, housing becomes sustainable, and that’s preventing future homelessness.

The benefits of these programs create a ripple effect. When Chrysalis Center and other private nonprofits provide supportive housing, the state of Connecticut saves money. When this population is housed, they are less likely to use the emergency room, require hospitalization, or end up incarcerated. Chrysalis Center recognizes the great strides that Connecticut has made to end homelessness in this state. It is critical that we are able to continue to provide services that really work. Therefore, we are asking the committee to
continue to support the budget line item for housing. Thank you for your time.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions? Thank you and thank you for testifying. Have a good evening and drive carefully. Mag? Tyrone Robinson? David Sutherland? He was just there? Okay, go ahead after Mag. Good evening.

MAG MORRELLI: Good evening, Representative Walker, Senator Osten, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Mag Morrelli and I’m the president of Leading Age Connecticut, a membership association representing over 130 not-for-profit organizations serving older adults across the continuum of care services, supports, and housing. Our membership includes not-for-profit providers of affordable senior housing, all of whom are committed to providing quality housing and services to their residents. We are pleased to be here tonight to testify in support of the governor’s proposal to fully fund the four subsidized Assisted Living Demonstration sites and the proposal to increase the level of rental assistance to support the long-term care rebalancing.

The Assisted Living Demonstration program provides subsidized assisted living to persons who reside in four specific Assisted Living Demonstration sites. These four sites were developed through a state initiative to provide community-based housing with services setting for low-income older adults who are eligible for the Connecticut Homecare Program for Elders. These are older adults who might otherwise need to move into a more expensive nursing home setting. When the four sites were developed, they
received funding from various sources, including state funding through the Department of Housing in the form of a rental subsidy and funding from the Homecare Program through the Department of Social Services for the assisted living services.

A Memorandum of Understanding was established between the funding sources and pursuant to that memorandum, the CHFA calculates the rental subsidy to be paid to -- by the Department of Housing in the amounts sufficient enough to pay the actual debt surface on the mortgage loans and bonds. THE MOU further requires OPM to include that amount in the governor’s budget submission. Unfortunately, the current budget does not include sufficient funding to meet that calculated rental subsidy and this is the first time that that has ever happened. The Department of Housing had to find funding elsewhere to make the shortfall, but this cannot be sustained and therefore we urge the committee to submit the governor’s proposal to fully fund the programs rental subsidy line item in the Department of Housing budget for the next two years.

The affordable assisted living sites are a wonderful model of providing affordable senior housing with services and the state has several of these models. Unfortunately, we’re a victim of our success in that as we allow people to age in place in their affordable housing unit, the unit does not become free -- doesn’t free up and so we have long waiting lists of people that are trying to obtain affordable senior housing. So we have several pieces of information in our testimony regarding the need for affordable senior housing in the state and also I put in some links to some research and resources that’s available to find other sort of data that
shows the success of this model. I think we should be proud that Connecticut has created such models. We actually -- Several other states look to us as having wonderful, successful models and so I commend us for doing that, but just urge us to consider investing in more units. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you for your testimony. So the one that you mentioned that was not fully funded was --

MAG MORRELLI: The four subsidized Assisted Living Demonstration projects.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay. And they’re not fully funded, okay.

MAG MORRELLI: The rental subsidy line item was rightfully funded, yes.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, thank you. Any questions? Yes.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for coming to testify. I have an elderly mother and I know how important it is to have the assisted living. Are any of these facilities that you talked about here go from assisted living to memory care or what happens to a resident who maybe has dementia or Alzheimer’s and can no longer be in an assisted living program?

MAG MORRELLI: If the assisted living -- there’s four levels of the assisted living services. Once they go beyond the fourth level, they would most likely be transferred into a skilled nursing facility.
REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay, great, and that’s not covered in any of the things that you have here, is that right?

MAG MORRELLI: That would move in -- That would be a different line item. I mean, the homecare program can provide quite a bit of assistance to someone who is living in their own apartment and they can provide personal care assistance, so there are other opportunities --

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Medication management?

MAG MORRELLI: Right, exactly, so you can be cared -- the homecare program can go quite far in taking care of someone at home or in their own apartment and these are their own apartments.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay, great. Thank you so much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

MAG MORRELLI: Thank you

REP. WALKER (93RD): David Sutherland? David? There he is, and after David, Glen Appel.

DAVID SUTHERLAND: Thank you. My name is David Sutherland. I’m here tonight on behalf of the --


DAVID SUTHERLAND: I’m here tonight on behalf of the Nature Conservancy to first of all thank the committee for the support you have given the DEEP over the past several years and most recently and particularly, the Passport to the Parks program. I
know some of the committee members put a lot of sweat and stuck their necks out on that one and it’s been a very, very vital program and so we thank you for that and we very much support the governor’s proposals around that program. I primarily want to speak this evening to our opposition to their proposals around the Community Investment Act and to express our agreement with some of the sentiments that were expressed earlier by some of the committee members.

I think the administration’s attentions are good. It said in the proposal it’s to increase transparency and accountability, but I would respect argue that the program is very transparent and accountable now and I think if anything, this would diminish the transparency and I think that revenue stream, that funding, would rapidly become viewed as just any average revenue or appropriation and it would basically dismantle the Community Investment Act, which has been an extremely successful program. It’s helped virtually every committee in the state and it’s created a lot of very good jobs on the ground, local Connecticut jobs, and just on a personal level, I’d like to say that there are many wonderful state programs throughout state government that my organization just doesn’t have time to get involved with. They are very worthwhile.

We can’t even address all of the environmental programs, but through this coalition, through this program, my organization is able to in some small way be an advocate for housing, not only for environmental issues, but for housing, for historic preservation, for farmland and agricultural viability and we’re very proud of that and just on, again, on a personal level, I would hate to see us
lose that ability to be advocates for all of these and I think the cohesiveness that this program has brought to those different communities has been important beyond the Community Investment Act and it’s helped us all learn more and convey to you more cohesiveness about the way these different sectors interact with each other. So thank you again for your support.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): So I can’t agree with you more that I think we need to fund these programs through the Community Investment Act. I think it’s the right way to do things. It’s worked for a really long time. We’ve had the money there. I really do believe that once this is moved into the general fund that the programs that we all care about will disappear and the money will be succumbed as a regular general fund appropriation and it will not be used for the -- for what it’s really been designated for.

Even today, in looking at the funding, the dairy farms are not getting what they’re supposed to. As a matter of fact, this quarter it’s only 61 cents and it was $1.30 dollars per unit and I think that that leads me to believe that people are not recognizing a $3 billion dollar industry that the dairy farms have, doesn’t recognize some of the other things that we need to move forward on and quite frankly, land is being grown anymore and so we need to save as much as we can to have it for the future for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren and so I think, you know, that’s extremely important and I’m very concerned about this and I’m very concerned about some of the transfers into the
Passport to Parks program for staffing, that we’re going to crowd out the very desirable part of the Passport program and that is keeping our parks open.

We had a number of years when they were not open and they are vital to the tourism in our area and they’re vital to the health of our children so that we can actually see things on the outside, so I’m very happy that you came and testified today on this extremely important issue.

DAVID SUTHERLAND: Great, well, and we look forward to talking with you and with the agency about the Passport. As I guess I understand it, I think ultimately it’s -- on balance, it’s a good thing they’re doing with Passport, the way they’re shifting it, but perhaps I’m misreading it.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): I’m worried about it. It took us a long time to convince people that the Passport to Parks was a good program and even this year, there looks like there will be a few changes that happen to the revenue source of that and any more that we put on that will impact what we are funding out of the Passport to Parks program, something that’s really vitally important, so I think we do have to talk about it and make sure we’re not damaging that program and make sure we’re not putting too many stressors on it.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Do you have a question? Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening. Thank you for being here. I agree with you and I have the same question I asked someone earlier, I ask you to play devil’s advocate
for a minute. Have you heard a good argument for shifting this into the general fund?

DAVID SUTHERLAND: Well, first I want to say I haven’t talked with the administration about it, so I assume they’ve got better arguments than what I would be able to muster.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): I’m not asking you to agree with it.

DAVID SUTHERLAND: How would I sell that?

REP. WALKER (93RD): We’ll ask the administration.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Just on other quickie, did -- has this ever been proposed before? I’m not aware of that.

DAVID SUTHERLAND: No, it hasn’t been, yeah. Again, this is better -- I think certainly their intentions are much better than some of the previous proposals to just sweep all of the funding away completely. I just don’t think this is going to help in the way they’re stating it will.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Yeah, I agree with you, but maybe there’s much we don’t know. Anyway, thank you.

DAVID SUTHERLAND: Great, thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Thank you. Next we have Glen Appel and after Glen, Robert Murdock. Is Robert Murdock here? Great. Go right ahead, sir.

GLEN APPEL: Good evening, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Glen Appel and I’m the director of Luther Ridge, a senior living
community for moderate to low income seniors in Middletown. My community is one of the four Assisted Living Demonstration Projects you just heard two speakers ago talk about, some I’m actually the administrator at one of those programs. I drive the community bus, I teach the exercise class, I help shovel the snow, and I administer the programs, love what I do. I appreciate the opportunity to appear here today and advocate on behalf of my residents who depend on the Assisted Living Demonstration Project offered at Luther Ridge and I’m here to testify about my concerns regarding any potential state funding changes to this important program.

The Assisted Living Demonstration Project at Luther Ridge was developed as one of the four Assisted Living Demonstration pilots with the goal of saving state Medicaid funds being spent on long-term care facilities. Our program offers affordable housing complete with necessary assisted living services to the senior population that simply could not afford these services otherwise. We provide these seniors three meals a day, an on-site wellness center, a social worker to help the resident navigate support services, social opportunities, security, transportation, and assistance with bathing, dressing, and medication management. I can certainly appreciate the difficult choices facing this committee, however, please consider how the Assisted Living Demonstration Project programs we offer help mitigate even greater costs to this state by providing Connecticut residents with the housing and support services they need to remain in a far more supportive, cost effective environment than premature placement in a nursing facility.
By continuing to provide this program at Luther Ridge, to state that at the very least postpones and many times eliminates the need to fund higher care long-term nursing home care for this population. in closing, I ask that during your budget deliberation, this committee recognize the significant value to the senior individual in need in our community and the very real net budgetary savings I feel this program provides and I’ll leave my comments there, but Representative, I would like to answer your question. We do not have secure memory care at our demo and I believe none of the demos do have that.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and how many residents do you have in your program?

GLEN APPEL: Luther Ridge is 133 in three different programs, 135, about 140 residents, but the Assisted Living Demonstration program is 45 units.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And you’ve been -- how long have you been around? How long have you been --

GLEN APPEL: I’ve been there forever. I’ve been the administrator of Luther Ridge for five years.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay. Questions? Thank you, sir, and thank you for your testimony.

GLEN APPEL: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Next Robert Murdock, Ramin Ganeshram. You’re Robert?

ROBERT MURDOCK: I can’t say good afternoon anymore, good evening.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Good evening.

ROBERT MURDOCK: Thank you for the opportunity to be here this evening on behalf of the Connecticut
Convention and Sports Bureau. My name is Bob Murdock. I am the president of the organization. The Connecticut Convention and Sports Bureau, basically our role is to help bring meetings, events, trade shows to Connecticut that are going to have an economic impact toward the state and in fiscal year 2018, for every one dollar that the state funded us, we brought back $8.60 dollars in state tax revenue. So we are an economic driver for the state. The Connecticut Convention and Sports Bureau is the only statewide meeting and sports events sales marketing organization. We generate business across the state by helping secure bookings at convention centers, hotels, sports complexes, and tourism attractions that double as unique venues for events.

We practically educate, market, and sell the state of Connecticut to event planners from around the country and around the world. We’re really trying to bring in new revenue to the state as well as help grow some of the events that are here in the state already. And these events we help bring in, they utilize hotels, meeting venues, convention centers, attractions, restaurants, gas stations, you name it, people are out in the community spending money and we also encourage these people to do to the arts, to arts and culture attractions, really just get out and get involved in Connecticut. Again, our role is to bring events to the state. Ideally, we’re a small staff, so ideally we’re trying to bring multi-day events that are televised and one example of that is coming up on March 21st and 23rd at the Xcel Center, the NCAA men’s basketball first and second rounds March Madness is returning to Connecticut.
It’s been gone for 21 years, so we’re very excited that that’s coming back.

That event just on itself, and I’m conservative with my numbers, but we’re expecting over $7.7 billion dollars in business sales that come in, including $550 -- over $550,000 dollars in state tax revenue just for that one event, but, you know, we’re really all about collaboration. We’re a staff of four and we really get out there, we’re trying to collaborate, we’re a facilitator bringing events here. We can’t bring events by ourselves. We’re working our venues, our leaders from cities and government to help bring those events here, as well as venues, hotels really trying to bring people together for a common goal and I just wanted to -- we are funded through DECD and we’re hoping that we would get more funding to restore our staffing back to when we were funded -- were founded in 2012. We were ten people, we are now four.

We’re trying to be more proactive in selling and marketing Connecticut, but there’s only so much you can do with four people. When I started in 2014, I was in charge of sports sales. Now I am president in charge of sports sales and we call the SMERF market, which is social, military, education, religious, and fraternal, so I am now three people and one so we’re hoping to get additional funding to add some staff and be more proactive selling. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. How much are you funded?

ROBERT MURDOCK: $425,000 dollars.

REP. WALKER (93RD): $425,000 dollars, okay.
ROBERT MURDOCK: And in 2012, we were $1 million dollars.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Are there any questions? Yes.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you, Madam Chair. What line item, do you know, in the budget?

ROBERT MURDOCK: We’re funded through DEC through the Office of Tourism.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay.

ROBERT MURDOCK: And we’re a mixed -- we’re a private/public partnership, so we’re not -- I’m not a state employee. We received last -- or this fiscal year we’re in right now $425,000 dollars from the state and we raised on our $250,000 dollars between membership and events that we put on.


RAMIN GANESHRAM: With all due respect, you pronounced it wrong. I’m sorry, it’s Ramin Ganeshram.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Oh, Ramin, I’m so sorry.

RAMIN GANESHRAM: That’s okay, everyone does it. Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and committee members, my name is Ramin Ganeshram. I’m executive director Westport Historical Society and History Museum in lower Fairfield County. Thank you for accepting my testimony supporting state funding to CT Humanities. In 2015, WHS undertook a strategic planning initiative under CT Humanities Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations to
create a strategic plan to transform into a community-oriented, service-based educational institution. As part of this plan, WHS aimed to produce a higher level of exhibits and programs bases in deeper scholarship, best practices for diversity, and access to all individuals.

Most notable is our award-winning exhibit, Remembered: The History of African Americans in Westport and its related program series produced through CT Humanities funding. The exhibit has won state and national awards for its exploration and understanding of race identify and belonging in Connecticut. With state support during 2018, we’ve been able to provide free programming around the 200th anniversary of the state Constitution, including programming to contextualize that historical even with African American suffrage. We have offered 600 free tickets to Remembered for those attending Westport Country Playhouses, Martin Luther King Day celebration in collaboration with Team Westport and the Westport Library.

We were honored to use Remembered as a backdrop to fundraise for colleague institutions such as Bridgeport Freeman Center and we provided enhanced learning opportunities for 500 Westport school children to explore race, identity, and civil liberties, as well as curricula around research writing and observation. In 2019 and 2020, we plan even more ambitious projects to shed light on hidden facts of history, particularly for disenfranchised peoples. We strive to make this programming available to visitors regardless of income, but we cannot do this without the financial support, planning advice, and most of all the encouragement
of CT Humanities and funding from the state of Connecticut. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions? Yes, Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Good evening. I just wanted to say thank you for being here and for sharing a little information on one of your very, very best programs. They’re all of extremely high quality in Westport and we’re lucky to have you, so thank you for your testimony.

RAMIN GANESHRAM: My pleasure. Thank you for allowing me to testify.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Drive safely.

RAMIN GANESHRAM: Thank you.


ERIC HAMMERLING: Good evening and thank you for being so efficient. I’m very impressed. My name is Eric Hammerling. I’m the executive director of the Connecticut Forest and Park Association and I’m here to make a statement that I hope will not be controversial. Programs that are working should be supported and left alone, especially when they pay for themselves. Specifically I’m here to testify to express enthusiastic support for the Passport to Parks, which is working, and is largely left intact in the governor’s budget, as well as concern, though, for the Community Investment Act which also works the best when left intact.
Before the Passport to Parks, four campgrounds were closed. Hours and services were limited at park facilities statewide. There were chronic shortages in critical seasonal workers, like lifeguards and park maintainers, closure of parks was a reality, but now in return for the biannual DMV charge, Connecticut residents enjoyed free entry to state parks and forests in 2018, attendance of 9 million visitors increased by an estimated 10 percent, all campgrounds were open and the parks were safer and better maintained than they have been in years.

When left intact, things worked, but when left intact, the Community Investment Act works. It works for farms, for open space, for affordable housing, for historic preservation, and for dairy farmers and we share the concerns that this committee has expressed throughout the evening and also by other speakers. If CIA funds are moved into the general fund as line items to various agencies, we worry about what the next move might be. But it really doesn’t matter what I think. If you as legislators feel that this shifts relatively stable CIA funding to shakier grounds, I have reason to be concerned and I share your concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to testify tonight.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. I think you’ve heard the concerns from many of my colleagues up here about the security by making these adjustments and I think we’re going to spend a lot of time talking about this in our subcommittee, I guarantee you on that. Are there any questions -- any comments, questions? Senator Osten, do you have a question?
SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you. So on the move of the positions into the Passport to Parks, the Passport to Parks program was ultimately to give us some funding to help out with capital improvements. Do you have a concern regarding moving those positions and if it’s going to squeeze out our ability to essentially pay for those capital projects out of the Passport to Parks program?

ERIC HAMMERLING: Well, I guess I have a slightly different understanding of the Passport to Parks program. I think that, you know, the capital bonding has been typically how capital improvement projects have been funded through DEEP. We did anticipate that this would be used both for supporting seasonal workers, who are such a critical part of maintaining parks through spring to the fall after a recreation season and the movement of some full-time positions onto the Passport actually takes some pressure off of the general fund, which is a good thing. I do appreciate, though, very much, you’re paying very close attention to the numbers to make sure that this is going to have impacts on the other things we hope the Passport will do, but I guess our analysis at this point is that it’s about right in terms of the money that’s being generated through the Passport and the expenses that they have in mind for this next year, so we do believe that it’s sustainable and -- but we’re certainly hopeful that that will be the case.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): So the governor has stated that he is putting the legislature on what is termed as a death diet. I was actually he would put me just on a regular diet, but I’m a little bit concerned that money that might have been available to do some of those upgrades will not happen, if they need a new
well or they need a new shower facility, that those things will be sort of thought as of extras and not as necessary, but if we’re going to continue to have people go to our parks, we need bathroom facilities and if they’re going to camp, they need shower facilities, so over the next little bit, I’d appreciate it if you would continue to keep an eagle eye on this and let me know what you think, in particular as we do through the finance, revenue, and bonding pieces of it, and, you know, ultimately I was hoping our parks would be self-sustaining and not need any money out of bonding, so I’m a little bit concerned about that piece of it and I am concerned about the CIA fund and I appreciate your looking at this and being sort of, you know, very mind’s eye on what we’re actually deciding to do here, so thank you.

ERIC HAMMERLING: Yeah, and thank you for your efforts to get the Passport in place to begin with. We really appreciate what you have done. I share your goal of wanting to see the state parks be self-sustaining based on what’s coming through the Passport. I never -- but just me personally, didn’t think that would necessarily take care of capital investments as well, but certainly at least I’d love to see the staff pieces of the park system be taken care of in a sustainable fashion. I guess I’ll just end by saying my wife has offered to put me on a death diet, so if you ever do the same, I will look forward to doing that with you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Representative Lavielle.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Thank you, Madam Chair. Good evening, Eric.

ERIC HAMMERLING: Good evening.
REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): I just had a question about something in your testimony because we’ve been talking about the disadvantages of moving this over to the general fund and mostly what we’ve been talking about is transparency.

ERIC HAMMERLING: Right.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): And do I understand properly that you also have a concern about the funds being limited by the constraints that are put on the budgets within the line items in the general fund?

ERIC HAMMERLING: Yes, and thank you for raising that point. On a typical year, and there is no such thing as a typical year, but the average for the Community Investment Act is around $25 million dollars a year that comes in, but what’s articulated in the budget through the various line items I believe is closer to $18 million dollars, so it does raise the question what about those $7 million dollars, why is that not going to support the purposes of the Community Investment Act, so I do believe that’s one of the downfalls of moving to line items, especially when they seem to be capped at certain levels, so I think that’s a lot of CIA potential funding that could be supporting those priority programs.

REP. LAVIELLE (143RD): Okay, thank you, I appreciate that.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. Have a good evening. Drive safely.

ERIC HAMMERLING: You, too. Thank you.
REP. WALKER (93RD): Amy Paterson and Chelsea Gazzilo. Chelsea? No?

AMY BLAYMORE-PATERSON: Chelsea is not here.


AMY BLAYMORE-PATERSON: Thank you. For the record, I’m Amy Blaymore-Paterson and I’m the executive director of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council, or CLCC, which is the statewide umbrella organization for Connecticut’s land conservation community, including our 137 awesome land trusts. I want to thank you for this opportunity and thank you for all the work that you’ve done this far and all the work that lies ahead with respect to hammering out this budget. I did submit my written testimony and I was also doing a lot of head-nodding in the back there as my colleague, Eric Hammerling, was testifying, particularly as to the Community Investment Act, so I’m going to be pretty brief, but I do want to be on record with respect to a couple of those points as well.

The CIA is clearly working; $152 million dollars has been reinvested in over 1,400 projects in every community in Connecticut and every community in Connecticut has been benefitted by those projects. For land conservation, which clearly is our sector’s most important focus, the Community Investment Act is the only consistent source of funding for the Open Space and Watershed Land Grant program, or OSWA, which all land trust towns and water companies refer to it as, and that’s the state’s matching grants program. Again, CIA is the only consistent source of funding. It also funds the Community
Garden Program and the Urban Green Program and it’s the only source of funding for those, as well.

So we’re puzzled by the contention that a change to a line item, general fund line item, would bring stability to the program and we agree with all the comments that have been made tonight to say just the opposite. While an appropriation now to DEEP, for example, or any of the agencies could be considered stable through this legislature as well as this administration, that could easily change as we all know as time goes along and we really worry about the long-term viability of the Community Investment Act program and similarly, as Eric Hammerling has just testified, one of the things that we did note was the $18.5 million dollars that stated in that line item there is less than what the Community Investment Act brings in annually and so if we’re looking for transparency and accountability, we would be -- we would like to know, you know, where would that -- where would that difference go and for those programs and maybe not for the programs for which the PCIA was sent up.

So we share all of those concerns that have been articulated, as well as those that you have raised yourself and with that, I will close and just thank you again for your time and all your energy in doing all that you do. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions? Thank you.

AMY BLAYMORE-PATERSON: Thank you so much.

Oh, there’s Richard. Okay, Alex Johnson? Okay, good. Good evening.

DAVID RICH: I think it’s on.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yeah, it’s on.

DAVID RICH: David Rich. I’m the executive director of Supportive Housing Works, which is a backbone agency working with over 200 agencies, mostly in eastern -- I’m sorry, western Connecticut and all forms of homelessness. It’s an honor to be here. Thank you Senators Osten and Formica and Representatives Walker and Lavielle and especially my home reps, Representative Horn, great to see you up there, and Representative Santiago, whom I’ve worked with for a long, long time down in Bridgeport. It’s -- You have my written testimony, so I’m not going to go through it all tonight, but just reiterate that your work, your dedication, to the homeless over at least my time, and I know I’ve been working at it for 15 years, has made an incredible, incredible difference in what we’ve been able to achieve and we really are on the forefront of ending most forms of homelessness.

You know, we ended veteran homelessness, we’re on the cusp of ending chronic homelessness and being the first state in the nation to do that and really have the wherewithal and resources and the collective will to end family and youth homelessness in the next two years, but that does require and necessitate the continued commitment of funding for these hard-won gains and to truly end all forms of homelessness here in Connecticut. We’ve got to continue with the funding we have and be more innovative with some additional funding, which I’m just going to briefly go through those four points
which I think other of my colleagues have talked about.

The backbone of our work in homelessness is the RAP program, the rental assistance program. A few years ago when we had budget cuts, RAPs were not recycled back in the program and direct impact, the number of chronic, the number of homeless went up one to one with those -- with those cuts. We know we need these RAPs more than anything else if we’re going to truly end homelessness. That’s really the backbone of our program, especially for the most -- the most chronic, the most vulnerable, the mentally ill homeless. I’m mixed with the CIA reallocation. It’s really important to have that flexibility, but what the governor has proposed for the CIA reallocation for homeless, that makes sense. This was an innovative program three years ago, we didn’t know how much it would really work with the CANS operations and with 2-1-1. It’s been a phenomenal success and I would say -- I would say you’re going to hear from Richard later and from United Way and their terrific work. This is the essence of our -- of our homeless system. This is the brains. This is how we punch well above our weight class in other state in the -- in the country, of using the resources you give us and the federal government gives us to the most -- to the most advantage, so having that as a part of the appropriations I think makes sense, but being able to continue to have CIA as a flexible part try innovation, I think that makes sense too.

Very quickly, the Medicaid support; long overdue. We’ve needed to be innovative on that to locate a waiver and I really applaud that that’s in here and the homeless youth, it’s we really have the
resources to end youth homelessness in the next two years, but this commitment of these resources is critical for us to continue on that path. Again, thank you, for it’s your work that has made this possible here in Connecticut over the last decade.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Could you possibly send us -- thank you for your testimony -- could you send us the listing of where all of the placements have been for the homeless, the CANS program?

DAVID RICH: Yes, and that would be all the homeless. I mean, we -- it is phenomenal and we say this, now that can’t be and let me speak for Fairfield County and probably it’s 95 percent -- I’m sure it’s 95 percent of the rest of the state, it’s every homeless person comes through the CANS system, that’s how we operate and what that means is we understand, we assess their needs from the get-go. They don’t go on a wait list and we truly are able to judge what they need and also giving them the least they need at the beginning instead of putting everyone on a wait list, not trying to understand what their needs are, being able to get families, get youth back in homes right away and to not embrace the homeless, that’s not our job anymore. Our job is to keep them out of homelessness or if they do enter our system, to get them out as quickly as possible and that’s the role of the CANS to be able to do that.

Access other resources, whether it be working with housing authorities, whether it be working with other federal agencies so that we can bring these resources together to truly end homelessness. It’s -- I was not a believer six, seven years ago. I certainly am now. This system does work.
REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much. So if we had the brains of that being a regular general fund appropriation and did -- and had the flexibility of the CIA fund, you would not be opposed to that?

DAVID RICH: Oh, absolutely not. That would be the best of both worlds, so you can try it. For us, at least on the homeless side, it’s where we can really innovate, try things out, but when something does become -- as a state, we say this works, having that regular funding through appropriations I feel is important. The last couple years, we didn’t know. I mean, as you know, with these budget crises, often it wasn’t -- it was -- it was struck out of the initial budget, so it’s very hard to plan when this is our system, and especially for Richard here, the 2-1-1, we can’t operate without 2-1-1, so we’re saying what’s going to happen if we don’t have that funding, so regular funding is important, even if there’s a 5 percent decrease in appropriation, we can handle that, but having it totally wiped makes it very -- puts the whole system in jeopardy.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): So you would not be opposed if we kept it in the general fund, but then have CIA for those avant-garde programs and some other things?

DAVID RICH: I would fully support that.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Are there any other questions? Yes, Representative Horn.

REP. HORN (64TH): Thank you, Madam Chair, nice to see you, David. You hail from my neck of the woods
and you may have said this during the testimony, but I just want to be clear that it’s your belief with this -- the current level of proposed funding here that we can continue on the trend lines that you have cited here to end?

DAVID RICH: Yeah, yeah, so many of you know, by end doesn’t mean we don’t -- we’re not going to have youth become homeless, we’re not going to have families become homeless, but we have the wherewithal to find them and to quickly house them stably and permanently within 30 or 60 days and it’s a phenomenal, excuse me, it’s going to take a lot, but we’ve proven this with veterans, we’ve proven this with chronic and we’re well on our way to be able to show in the next two years with youth and with family that we can achieve these goals, so yes, we can.

REP. HORN (64TH): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Are there any other questions? Thank you, sir. Thank you for your testimony.

DAVID RICH: Thank you, again.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Have a good evening. Richard and then after Richard, Alex Johnson. Alex Johnson, over there.

RICHARD PORTH: Thank you, everyone. I really appreciate the chance to speak with you today. Can you hear me?

REP. WALKER (93RD): Just keep talking.

RICHARD PORTH: My name is Richard Porth and I work for United Way of Connecticut and 2-1-1 and we’re grateful for the chance to come in and talk about
all the work we’ve done together to fight homelessness in our state. I want to start by thanking all of you and the governor for the commitment over the past number of years to really innovative strategies to fight homelessness and I’m not going to go straight down this testimony that I’ve provided, but to just hit the high points in the way that David did as well. We are privileged and proud at United Way 2-1-1 to be part of a group of partners that include both government agencies and many, many nonprofit and community agencies that work together, came up with some creative ideas, some cost effective ways to try to address homelessness in the state and to see the results of that partnership that we’ve achieved over the past number of years.

To me, when I talk to my own staff, I say even if you’ve worked for a long time, only a few times will you get to be part of something where you’re really making a difference at a population level for many people and this is an example of government tackling big, big challenges, working with lots of community partners, and making a real difference in thousands of people’s lives. That’s what you’ve helped to support in recent years. The HART Act, the federal HART Act, this is Connecticut’s direct response to the requirements of the federal government to divert people away from homelessness, and you’ve heard previous speakers talk about that, to minimize the length of stay in shelter when people do have to go into shelter, and then to do everything you can to prevent people reentering shelter after they’ve left.

So we are lucky and proud to be part of that effort. The testimony I’ve provided provides more details
and you’ve heard of some of the accomplishments that we’ve all done together, you and the administration and all of us in the private side, to be leaders in the country. So I won’t go into the details on what specifically 2-1-1 has done except to say that we’re the front door and we work very hard with our partners to make sure that people land in the right place. So I’m here partly to say congratulations. I think all of us are part of something really big and really important. There is a new recommendation, a new line item, within the Department of Housing for homeless supports. That’s where the CIA money has been shifted in the governor’s budget and we understand the benefit of more transparency, more openness, and we support that.

We want to be together with our partners. We also understand there may be more risk involved in this recommend. We hope, however it’s done, that the state will continue to support what, again, I believe is one of the best recent examples in Connecticut of government tackling big challenges and making a difference in thousands of people’s lives. Thanks for the opportunity to talk.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony. I’m just going to kind of go to one of your other POCs that you work with, you still do Care For Kids applications?

RICHARD PORTH: We do.

REP. WALKER (93RD): And so the way that you do it, you take the information online, you package it, and then you send it to the Early Childhood agency? That’s the way the process is?
RICHARD PORTH: That’s right.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay. And are all of the levels open or are most of them closed and only certain levels open that we’re accepting applications?

RICHARD PORTH: We’re accepting applications -- When you say levels, Representative?

REP. WALKER (93RD): There are multiple levels. There’s teams that are with children, there are --

RICHARD PORTH: Okay, the PGs, the priority groups.

REP. WALKER (93RD):

RICHARD PORTH: Yes, we are accepting.

REP. WALKER (93RD): All levels?

RICHARD PORTH: Applications from all levels, correct.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, all right, I just didn’t know if I’d see you OEC is up, so I just wanted to sort of ask you about that because that’s very important to us, also. Questions? You did a fantastic job. Thank you, sir. Thank you, have a great evening. Be careful driving home.

RICHARD PORTH: Thank you, everyone.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Alex Johnson and after Alex, Thomas Griggs. Elsie is not here either? Daniel’s here. Okay.

ALEX JOHNSON: I think we’re on.

REP. WALKER (93RD): You’re on. Good evening, sir.

ALEX JOHNSON: Good evening, Representative Walker and Senator Osten and members of this committee. My
name is Alex Johnson and I am the president and CEO of Capital Workforce Partners, a workforce development board responsible for coordinating skilled training and workforce development strategies in the 37 town communities of the north central region also known as the greater Hartford or capitol area. We partner with the Connecticut Department of Labor and numerous other state and regional partners, including industry, community-based organizations, communication and training providers on a wide range of efforts, particularly building and sustaining an accessible customer-friendly network of American job centers offering a suite of services to prepare job seekers, particularly those with barriers, for jobs and careers with regional employers desperate for skilled talent.

I am here today to comment on the critical importance of the state’s budget investment and the work that we do with our numerous partners as we collectively strive to meet the talent needs of our employers. At this very moment, employers in key industry sectors cannot find the skilled workers to fill the high-value middle skill vacancies in advanced manufacturing, healthcare, construction, transportation, information technology, insurance, and financial services. Capital Workforce Partners recently did a survey that documented over 3,000 current job openings in these sectors that regional employers are asking CWP to help them fill. The governor’s proposed budget priorities go a long way in addressing this critical middle skills talent gap, however, the budget recommendations for the Connecticut Department of Labor do not adequately provide the resources needed to support skills
training for the untapped talent that Capital Workforce Partners is trying to implement.

I want to call your attention to two effective jeopardized programs. First in the Department of Labor’s budget, there’s provisions for the Second Chance Initiative, which we referred to as the Integrated Basic Education Skills Training Program. That program is called IBEST because it truly integrates basic skills with vocational training and certification. This program is recommended for funding at $311,000 dollars in the FY20 budget, a significant decrease from the $1.27 million dollars in state support appropriated in fiscal year 17. We urge the state to return this amount to its previous allocation of the $1.27 million dollars. This IBEST program has helped to meet the needs of the employers, has demonstrated high return on investment, and does a remarkable job of integrating individuals previously involved in the justice system back into their communities as productive contributors to our economy.

Over the last three years, a total of 405 former offenders have been enrolled, 300 have received industry recognized credentials, and 300 have entered employment with a retention rate of 84 percent. On a yearly basis, this program has paid for itself, both as it relates to individuals earning wages, paying taxes, staying out of prison, and reducing those costs to the state. The other program is the Jobs Funnel Program.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Can I get you to sum up because the bell range a while ago and so could I get you just to sum up the programs. I think we’re all pretty --
ALEX JOHNSON: Yes, I’ve given you this testimony, but did just also just encourage you to consider the funding for the Jobs Funnel Program, which is substantially reduced in funding and that provides training and support, particularly to the apprenticeship and construction trades working in partnership with the Building and Constructive Trades Council and again, I ask for your consideration of those two programs and again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and I apologize for being a little bit long-winded here.

REP. WALKER (93RD): That’s okay. We all are long-winded up here. So sir, I want to just quickly say that I’m glad you brought up the youth employment program. That is a critical one and maintaining that at $4 million dollars. I think I was very happy to see that. I would like to go back to the $5 million dollars or $6 million dollars that we had at one time, but -- and I think that program has done a phenomenal job in the whole state. It’s not just one area, it’s everywhere. The Apprenticeship Initiative is also something that I think is a strong program, too. I hope -- I think we will look into the IBEST because I think all of us know about the IBEST programs so that we will try to figure out what’s going on with that, but thank you for your testimony and thank you for staying.

ALEX JOHNSON: And thank you for your attention and your patience and your support. Thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): We have questions.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): I’m so sorry. I am so interested in this IBEST and the Jobs Funnel Program. What are your other sources of funding
because to lose, you know, that much funding, how are you all managing and what’s happening as a result of -- are you seeing less people and able to have less effect?

ALEX JOHNSON: You know, I wish I could say we’re seeing less people for the second chance IBEST program. We were fortunate to get a grant from our community foundation that enabled us to retain a basic core level of support, but that funding is expiring, so we are very concerned that the program will potentially be substantially modified without additional state support. For the Jobs Funnel Program, we’re also been fortunate to get a federal grant that has enabled us to mitigate the state cuts. That federal grant is also expiring, so without additional state support, we may be confronted with losing that particular program.

REP. DATHAN (142ND): Okay, great. Thank you so much for doing that. Thank you, Madam.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, and I think your workforce, they also get Workforce investment dollars, too, that they get as one of the --

ALEX JOHNSON: As an organization, we receive Workplace Innovation Opportunity funds, but those funds are not used to support these two programs.

REP. WALKER (93RD): No, these are very specific programs and the funding is there, but you do have funding from the Workforce Investment Act?

ALEX JOHNSON: Yes, that is correct.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay. Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): So looking at the Workforce Investment Act, it looks there is a $3.5 million
dollars in the Workforce Investment Act funding according to what I’m looking at right here, so is that spread out over all of the workforce investment force?

ALEX JOHNSON: You’re looking at a reduction for --

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Yes.

ALEX JOHNSON: And I think those budget numbers are preliminary because this is federal money.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Correct.

ALEX JOHNSON: So we haven’t gotten our final allocations. I will note that Connecticut last year, because of the low unemployment rate, we only received 90 percent of the previous year’s funding because of the hold harmless provision and we do expect that we will again receive 90 percent of that 90 percent, so we are looking for cuts to our Workforce Investment Opportunity Act funding.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Okay. And then you talked a bit about the Apprenticeship Initiative that we put $50 million dollars in bonding, only $5 million dollars has been released so far?

ALEX JOHNSON: That’s correct.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Have you done work with Eastern Workforce Investment Board on the manufacturing pipeline? I know that New Haven recently did some connections, there’s been a contract signed to increase that. Is that something that you’re interested or have you already done it?

ALEX JOHNSON: Oh, yes, I worked very closely with John Beauregard and we have modeled that Eastern Pipeline model in our region. We’re actually doing
that in partnership with Pratt and Whitney. We’re working with both Asnuntuck Community College to provide those trainees to Pratt and Whitney specifically, so yes we are implementing that particular funding model.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): So on the Pratt and Whitney initiative, do you have to like -- like Electric Boat has to go through a background check and clearances, I’m just curious if Pratt is the same thing?

ALEX JOHNSON: Yes, Pratt is the same thing, yes.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): So when you have somebody, there’s always this question. I was at a meeting the other day and we talked a bit about this and someone that’s incarcerated often has a hard time getting into our three major employers, of course, the Pratt and EB, so I’m curious, have you found a way around that or are you using these programs to get people into the subcontractors of the manufactures?

ALEX JOHNSON: Right. You know, we haven’t found a way around the background check issue, but we’re working with both Pratt and Whitney and the supply chain and we have been successful with placing individuals, you know, with our supply chain manufacturers.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): One of the other things that the Workforce Investment Board is working on is a private/public partnership is training at the high school level so that young people can get a job right out of high school, many of them making more than they would make if they had gone to a four-year college, so are -- do you have those same dollars
available to you to model that high school program which is directly connecting young people to manufacturing jobs?

ALEX JOHNSON: Yes, we do have some limited discretionary dollars and we are using those resources. We actually have a program in East Hartford and we’re working with Synergy High School in East Hartford in cooperation with C-CAT. C-CAT is providing peer apprenticeship training program, training for individuals in the high school and actually as of this week, one of those students actually graduated and got hired by Pratt Whitney, so we’re really trying to make this seamless between high school transition and employment and we would just also note that we have also -- within our application on the apprenticeship money, I’m looking to expand those strategies.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): And I’m just so fascinated by this because I think this is a gamer changer for us, big decades long of not getting young people right in there, are you finding that our vo-tech schools are not providing enough seats for young people to access the trades in one form or another, just they’re headed more towards a college-oriented program and sometimes not everybody wants to go to college and some people are designed to go right into the workforce, that’s what they want to do. You know, I think we should provide anybody with an ability for an education, should that be what they wanted, but I like to keep young people busy making some money.

ALEX JOHNSON: And I think you and I are in a similar position because I also support the apprenticeship programs, not just for those
individuals not going to college, but those who are potentially college-bound as well because we do see values in individuals working and going to school, doing an apprenticeship strategy, and earning their college degree, so I was very supportive of that model. As it relates to the vo-tech schools, our primary concern has been how do we enable those facilities to be used at all hours to augment the shops and the capacity that we need to provide training, really around the clock to meet the needs of our employer community.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): That’s what they’re doing down in Groton there. They’re using Ella Grasso in the evenings and I think that that’s a wonderful program. I look forward to working with you on these initiatives.

ALEX JOHNSON: Good.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your testimony.

ALEX JOHNSON: Thank you all for your support.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Daniel Fitzmaurice. Daniel is taking the place of Thomas Griggs and Elsie Chapman. You aren’t?

DANIEL FITZMAURICE: I wasn’t planning to.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, then sit down and wait. Okay. Elizabeth Donius.

ELIZABETH DONIUS: Hello.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Hello, hi.
ELIZABETH DONIUS: Hi. So I’m Elizabeth Donius. I’m the executive director of the Westville Village Renaissance Alliance and we’re funded through the Main Street Initiative line item. I’m going to read. I would like to thank the committee for their past support and ask them to continue to fund the Westville Village Renaissance Alliance, a small but mighty organization central to the economic vitality and cultural identity of Westville Village. As you may know, Westville Village is a historic commercial district in the heart of the New Haven neighborhood Westville, a place that people of all ages, incomes, and ethnicities are proud to call home. Westville is known and loved for its vibrant arts theme and its strong community spirit and these things make it a wonderful place to live and the kind of place where people want to live. It is a true success story of creative place-making.

In the two years since we last testified to this body, Westville has been flourishing. We have cut the ribbon on ten new businesses in our small district, eight of them in the past nine months, and there is additional development, large and small, on the immediate horizon. Anchor businesses have expanded. Many of our problematic properties have changed hands or are under contract and even our long-neglected neighborhood skate park saw transformative renovation. Chapel Haven, a pioneering resident school and independent living facility serving adults with disabilities doubled down on their commitment to Westville, investing $40 million dollars on a full campus renovation and even opening a store front selling amazing arts and crafts made by their adults.
This growth is notable for the diversity of the business owners and the decidedly creative bent of their entrepreneurship. We are now home to Connecticut’s first Cat Café and a thriving record shop selling only vinyl. These new businesses are increasing Westville’s foot traffic while not entirely being dependent on it. These are 21st century businesses with strong online presences. They build on the momentum created by other hybrid businesses like Lotta Studio, a photo studio that provides co-working for creatives and houses 13 individual artist studios and fashion designer Neville Wisdom’s shop, which incorporates his manufacturing and his showroom. These entrepreneurs are on the front lines of making modern main streets work and they have brought a young, vibrant energy to Westville.

WVRA, Westville Village Renaissance Alliance, has served as a centralizing body for the recent renaissance and played many critical roles through business recruitment, advocacy and support through streetscape maintenance and investment, through marketing efforts to define our identity as a creative, diverse and family friendly community through public art commissions, and through a formidable slate of community events, including the annual Art Walk, the Hi-Fi Pie Fest summer concert series and pie-baking competition, and most recently the Citywide Open Studios Westville Weekend that draw thousands of visitors annually.

WVRA has a strong arts focus in our own events, in our marketing efforts for Westville, and in our commitment to public art, and in our support and amplification of the artists, and arts-related businesses that are the beating heart of our
community. We recognize the important role the arts play not only in the Village’s identity, but in its economic vitality. Indeed, I would argue that Westville’s artists and strong arts identification have been the primary driver of the significant revitalization we have seen in the past few years.

I can skip on.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Just summarize.

ELIZABETH DONIUS: Okay, yes, so we also changed the zoning code in Westville Village over the past two years and that legislation that passed at the city level has been implemented and that we face significant challenges and our work continues and we are very, very grateful for the continued support we hope to get. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. Thank you for your testimony and I want to thank you and all the business owners in the Westville Village that have really brought life back to a community. I think a lot of people knew about that restaurant that used to be there that really brought the heart of Westville, Delaney’s. It’s amazing how many people cried when Delaney’s burned and it was all the way up to Hartford, but you guys have brought life back to that community and you show that there is hope in development and growth when you all link together and I was really excited about coming over to see some of the things that you are doing and I appreciate it and I look forward to all the events that you guys are going to do for the summer and the spring for the families in that area, so thank you very much for what you do.

ELIZABETH DONIUS: Thank you.
REP. WALKER (93RD): Questions? Questions? No?

REP. DILLON (92ND): I just wanted to thank you for being here, Lizzie. You’re listed as the West Village, not Westville Village, which is kind of neat and it makes me think of kind of the king of West Village, but Lizzie was here early this morning and has been sitting in the audience and listening to everyone’s testimony to make sure that she was here to fight for their neighborhood and I kept going up and offering her food, which is my first instinct, but I really want to thank you so much for really, for your perseverance and just being really dogged and as Representative Walker said, in really turning people’s thinking around because they were very despondent about losing an iconic building and convincing people piece by piece that it could come back and that was important, that was really important. Thank you so much.

ELIZABETH DONIUS: Thank you, and thank you Representative Walker, Representative Dillion, and Senator Winfield.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Senator Winfield.

SEN. WINFIELD (10TH): Just briefly and I don’t always do that, it’s my city, but the work that you guys have done in that portion of the city is remarkable. It is not -- It is not the same portion of the city that I knew just a short period of time ago and I think it’s the type of thing when we’re in this building and we’re talking about what potentially could happen with our municipalities and the state of Connecticut, we’re looking to have happen, and so thank you very much for helping us to make that happen and for everything in the way you have done.
ELIZABETH DONIUS: Thank you so much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and have a great day. Thank you. Be careful driving home.


MAISA TISDALE: Hi, my name is Maisa Tisdale. I am the president of the Mary and Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community in Bridgeport, founded as a grassroots historic preservation organization in 2009. We are now a 501(C)3. We own the historic Mary and Eliza Freeman houses built in 1848. I’m here to support funding for Connecticut Humanities. The Freeman Houses owned by sisters Mary and Eliza are Connecticut’s oldest surviving African American homes, the only two original structures remaining from an antebellum settlement of free people of color called Little Liberia. This independent seafaring town was founded by free Connecticut blacks and progressives around 1822, when the state and nation still had slavery. Research suggests that Little Liberia residents sought to establish a free city for people of color on Connecticut soil during slavery. Little Liberia had a seaside resort hotel for wealthy blacks, cited in a letter to Frederick Douglass, Bridgeport’s free lending library, a school for colored children, businesses and more.

The sisters were accomplished business women. When Mary Freeman died, the only Bridgeporter of greater wealth was PT Barnum. The houses are listed on the National Register of Historic Places for
significance to blacks and women. We are creating a national African American historic site in the south end of Bridgeport consisting of a museum and education center, digital research and humanities center, and housing. Our plans are designed to act as a catalyst to community development. Despite our best efforts, making this story known and raising funds has been hard. Then, last summer, the National Trust for Historic Preservation named the Freeman houses one of this nation’s 11 most endangered historic places. After a competitive process out of thousands of possible sites, the Trust determined that it was a national priority to preserve this Bridgeport site and story. We had to demonstrate that we had support from relevant statewide agencies. Connecticut Humanities stepped up with a grant. They also told us about a special initiative by the Smithsonian African American Museum and supported our application. We were accepted.

Connecticut Humanities is not only helping us share our story, it’s making sure that we have the business skills needed to run a national site. They reached out to us. Staff came to Bridgeport to let us know that Connecticut Humanities was committed to including the cultural narratives of African Americans, Native Americans, and industrial urban populations. Emerging nonprofits like ours face unique challenges that others don’t. Connecticut Humanities made it clear that they viewed us a resource and not a risk and would like to help us problem-solve to succeed despite tough odds. I’m pleased to support funding for Connecticut Humanities. They are empowering us to educate and rebuild our own community and with our bricks and
mortar needs being met through a $1 million dollar Good-to-Great grant by the state, we can now turn our attention to telling the story of Little Liberia. Connecticut Humanities is essential to this effort. Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Wow, thank you so much for bringing that story. I never knew about Little Liberia. Now I’m really -- Did you know about Little Liberia?

REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): Oh, yes I did, actually, it’s in the district I represent and if I may, Maisa, thank you so much.

MAISA TISDALE: Thank you.

REP. SANTIAGO (130TH): You are someone who -- I personally think that if it wasn’t for your efforts and your organization, there’s a chance we could lose those homes and your efforts are really making a difference in that regard. Happy to hear of the recent successes and your testimony means a lot to me because I didn’t know that Connecticut Humanities assisted you in the way they do. I knew that they were out there helping a lot of people, but that’s important to me, so I want to thank you for sharing that story.

MAISA TISDALE: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you very much. Any other questions? Thank you so much. Have a good evening and a safe drive home. Jason?

JASON MANCINI: Good evening. Thank you, Senator Osten and Representative Walker and members of the committee for the opportunity to speak about the role and importance of Humanities to Connecticut
residents, Connecticut history and heritage organizations, and Connecticut’s economy. My name is Jason Mancini and I’m the executive director of Connecticut Humanities. Connecticut Humanities, also known as the Connecticut Humanities Council, is a state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities and it’s been actively shaping and supporting the history, heritage, and civics foundation of our state since 1974. Our grants and programs and digital initiatives continue to provide access to high quality Connecticut-based content for all of Connecticut’s residents and visitors. Connecticut Humanities has received state funds for the CT Humanities Fund since 1995, with the exception of FY17, but thanks to this committee’s support and the legislature’s partial restoration of our funding in FY18 and FY19, we’ve restored our statewide partnerships and re-granted -- re-granted to approximately 150 organizations under our aegis.

Governor Lamont’s current budget proposal maintains flat funding of $850,000 dollars for CT Humanities in FY20 and FY21. I would encourage this committee to review the governor’s arts, culture, and tourism policy committee proposal that proposes an increase in funding for CT Humanities from the current proposal of $850,000 dollars to approximately $2.1 million dollars. This proposal is supported by the speakers -- House Speaker Aresimowicz’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Tourism. We embrace the governor’s and legislature’s support of our mission and recognize that increased funding awarded to Connecticut Humanities represents an investment in Connecticut’s history and heritage organizations, education and heritage tourism assets, and a commitment to civic engagement and community revitalization.
These are investments in our state’s future and in our sense of place. I would like to respectfully request that the members of this committee fully support the recommendation of the ACT policy committee and the Blue Ribbon Panel and increase funding to $2.1 million dollars, as well as the other policy proposals and if I could just add a little bit about our other initiatives. I talked about the Connecticut Humanities Fund and you heard a little bit from Ramin and Maisa, who have been wonderful representatives of the work we’re trying to do across the state, but we also have -- we host the center -- Connecticut Center for the Book, which is a partnership with the Library of Congress and through that, we have a book voyagers program that works with our youngest citizens around issues of literacy, literature education, and comprehension and we have a number of digital humanities initiatives that really sort of bring us well into the 21st Century for all of our residents and visitors.

We have a new app coming out soon called ConnTours that begins to weave the fabric of Connecticut’s history and heritage together. I’ll stop there and thank you very much.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Could you just explain a little bit more, not -- just very short, a little bit more about what ConnTours is because I don’t think people understand what it is.

JASON MANCINI: Sure. We began to partner with a number of organizations to tie together some of the themes of the state and what we’ve started -- and recognizing our own humanities content, we began to develop a mobile approximately that is based on
different themes, so we’re piloting a number of themes, including a partnership -- in partnership with DECD, the Freedom Trail, that’s one of our apps, we’re creating a Revolutionary Trail and this just is an example, with Revolutionary Trail, many people -- I’m from the southeastern part of the state, so Fort Griswold and Fort Trumbull are two places that might be very recognizable, but most people wouldn’t think to connect that to the Battle of Ridgefield or events in Westport and the old state house and Rochambeau’s Trail in Lebanon and so on, but this app will begin to connect all of these dots across different themes, so we’ll look for -- we’re working with the Women’s Hall of Fame to bring Women’s Heritage Trail, Battlefields of the Pequot War, a Yankee Ingenuity Trail, Supernatural Places, and it’s going to serve to better connect our entire state.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you. I think that’s fantastic and I’m hoping that it will also be advertised at our visitors stops or the rest stops and everything so as people drive through, we can connect them with all of these opportunities of tourism that we can promote in different areas, so thank you.

JASON MANCINI: Yes, indeed.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you very much.

JASON MANCINI: We are working with Tourism to make those connections.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yeah, thank you. Yes, Senator Osten.

SEN. OSTEN (19TH): Thank you very much, Jason, and I absolutely love the work that you’re doing. I
want to thank you for not only the work that you’re doing with Connecticut Humanities, but the work you did in establishing the Mashantucket-Pequot Museum. It’s made it -- I believe you’re the number one museum in the country on Native American history and I want to thank you for doing that. Thanks so much, Madam Chair.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for the -- for your testimony. Have a good night and drive home safely.

JASON MANCINI: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Wendy?

WENDY BURY: Good evening.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Good evening.

WENDY BURY: My name is Wendy Bury. I’m the executive director of the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition, a nonprofit organization that serves more than 500 partners in New London County and its surrounding areas, including art institutions, performing arts centers, museums, historical societies, artists, and arts programs. I also serve as the vice-president of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, a statewide arts advocacy organization and co-chair of its policy issues committee and I also served as the co-chair of the Lamont-Bysiewics Transition (ACT) Policy committee. I want to thank you all for your support over the years for investment in arts and culture.

We support the recommendations put forth by the ACT policy committee and I’ll elaborate on those on a second, but you’ve already heard a little bit of them. These recommendations that are from the ACT
policy committee are also supported by the Connecticut Arts Alliance, the Connecticut Tourism Coalition, Connecticut Humanities, Connecticut Restaurant Association, and the Blue Ribbon Panel. So you’ve heard from our previous speakers about arts and culture. All of the speakers so far are either members or board members of the Connecticut Arts Alliance or have been on ACT policy committee, so you are seeing a united front in support for the recommendations. Arts and culture represents 5 percent of the Connecticut — of Connecticut’s economy, generates $9 billion dollars annually, supports 57,000 jobs, and the nonprofit arts and culture organizations, which are the recipients of most of the state’s investment, generate $800 million dollars annually, a 7-to-1 return in investment.

In New London County alone, it’s $168 million dollars in economic activity and that’s greater than each of the entire state of Vermont, the entire state of Delaware, and the entire state of Maine. Our small little corner of the state actually packs an enormous economic punch and represents one-fifth of the state’s total economic activity for nonprofit arts and culture and it attracts more than 3 million visitors to our area outside of the casinos.

But more important, these are all revenue generators and not cost centers. You’ve heard about the educational impacts for the students. I could go on and on and so could they across the state from the organizations that don’t just do great arts and culture, but actually serve the students of the future and provide them with incredibly enriching programs, but beyond the economic impact, arts and culture are major contributors to Connecticut's
quality of life and central to the decision-making process for businesses, workers, and families looking for a home here. In collaboration with Electric Boat, our organization, the Cultural Coalition, conducted an employee survey of all Electric Boat employees which garnered more than 1,500 responses in the first 24 hours. EB, as you know, is on a hiring spree and is bringing thousands of new employees to Connecticut, providing them with great jobs and disposable income.

It is incumbent upon the cities and towns to ensure that we retain these employees and they’ve asked us to help do that. Our survey asked of employees what they like to do when they’re not working and the results were clear; young millennial workers value arts and culture, music, events, outdoor festivals, recreation activities, a lot of beer, and more. With thousands of new employees coming to our region, it’s vital that our cities and towns meet that demand and decreasing investment from the state over the years has actually led to arts and culture organizations decreasing in staff and programs and hours, but today they are shovel ready for that investment.

So the recommendations from the ACT policy committee are threefold; to increase the amount of the lodging tax revenue deposited to the tourism fund. We understand that there was concerns about the governor’s budget and the $1.8 to $1.9 million dollars that was in the revenue side but not on the expenditure side. We have received confirmation through the director of policy and had many conversations in the past 12 hours that two reasons for that missing $1.9 million --
REP. WALKER (93RD): Wendy, you’ve got to sum up.

WENDY BURY: That was the issue of the spending cap on one part of it and also they didn’t know where to allocate it, so we’ve been assured that if it was an increase, that money would come to the tourism fund. The big piece of the recommendations is a 60/40 split between arts and culture and tourism. We spelled it out in our testimony and to obviously change the name, so I’ll end it at that, just to support the ACT policy recommendations from the transition committee.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Okay, we’ve had a lot of people here to testify, which is good.

WENDY BURY: I’m just bringing it all home for one last time.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Well, thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you for your testimony. Daniel and then Julia, are you testifying? Okay, good.

DANIEL FITZMAURICE: Thank you, Senator Osten and Representative Walker for being here with us tonight and the rest of the committee. I am here for the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, which is a nonprofit service organization, sister organization, to Wendy Bury’s in southeastern Connecticut. Our mission is to amplify, empower, and unit the artists’ creative organizations and audiences in our region, which in my humble opinion, is the cultural capital of our state. The nonprofit sector alone in our region produces $135 million dollars in economic activity, has 5,600 full-time jobs, and attracts 700,000 plus attendees every year, but what I want to talk about though, is my work for the Connecticut Arts Alliance as well as the work that I did on the
Lamont-Bysiewicz Arts, Culture, and Tourism Policy Committee because as Appropriations, unfortunately, you only get to appropriate $1.46 dollars for every resident in our state and if you were in the Appropriations Committee in Massachusetts, you’d have about $2.00 dollars more and in Rhode Island, $2.99 dollars, so I wish that your committee would have more to work with because I understand and I thank you so, so much and I echo what my colleagues have thanked you for your continued interest and support for arts and culture, as well as your work to create the tourism fund, which is as close to a silver bullet as we’ve ever had.

So once again, re-allocating more of the revenue coming in from the lodging tax is really like investing our dividends into the community and that matters and it will return back to the state. Please dedicate 40 percent to arts and culture and 60 percent to tourism, which is what the governor’s budget proposes, it’s what has historically been mirrored over the last couple of years and there are amazing alignment around that between our sometimes different industries and as simple as it is, change the name of the fund so that we can all celebrate the intention around that. And in conclusion, I’d love to answer questions if you have any this late in the evening, but I really believe that arts and culture in this state are shovel ready. Those jobs that were lost over the last ten years can come back quickly. The programs that are no longer serving as many families and children as they did ten years ago, we’ll bring them back immediately, so please consider arts and culture a solution that can immediately respond to the needs of our community. It’s so much faster than a lot of the other
complicated things I have recognized you’re working on, so thanks for your support and I’m happy to take questions.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you, Daniel. Thank you for your testimony. I think we’ve asked every question possible on these things tonight.

DANIEL FITZMAURICE: Call me if you have more.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yes, we will. Thank you and have a good evening. Have a safe drive home and Julia, is there anybody else in here who has not testified? Is there anybody who has not testified? Go right ahead.

JULIA WILCOX: I was number 98 this morning, so I’m thrilled to be 40 something.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Yeah, you get 44.

JULIA WILCOX: Good evening, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Lavielle, and members of the committee. My name is Julia Wilcox, manager of advocacy and public policy at the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance. The Alliance is the statewide advocacy organization representing nonprofits with a membership of more than 300 community organizations and associations. Nonprofits deliver essential services to more than half a million people each year and employ almost 14% of Connecticut’s workforce. I appreciate the opportunity to be here this evening. You have my extensive testimony hopefully before you. Our testimony relates to the three state agencies, the ECD, Department of Housing, and Department of Labor. You have heard magnificent testimony from all of our arts and culture folks. I will simply say that we completely support the works of the Arts Alliance
and the committee and I’ll sort of leave it at that. I know you’ve heard their great data.

The one thing I did want to do is circle back to an earlier discussion around the actual kind of reductions to arts and culture line items. I believe that Senator Formica had a few questions as to whether or not that had occurred and I think maybe why it’s not quite as visible is that most of those reductions have shown up in never-ending deficit mitigation plans, so the sooner those come through, unfortunately, the line items will hit just about every time, so I just wanted to share that with you.

And I’d like to just highlight two quick areas within the departments of housing and labor. With regard to the Department of Housing, we thank the governor for his proposal to adjust funding to the subsidized Assisted Living Demonstration and you’ve heard all those stats, I won’t go through that. You’ve heard just about everything today. We also support the proposal to expand funding for the implementation of the Medicaid supportive housing benefit for high-cost, high-need individuals. We also support their proposal to expand funding to provide rental assistance vouchers to support the DSS long-term care rebalancing strategy and we also support the governor’s proposal to fund rental assistance caseload growth.

So we certainly want to thank the governor and thank all of you for your work to annualize the 1 percent cost of living increase that was passed last year and we so appreciate your support in making that happen. As you consider the governor’s budget, and this again relates to housing, we request that you
consider the recommendations of the Commission on Equity and Opportunity, or the CEO, reentry working group. The final report, *Hope for Success: Returning Home*, addresses the scope of the problem. Homelessness and housing instability among the reentry population in Connecticut and again, I have those outlined in my testimony and I will leave it at that because it’s far too late, but if you have any questions, certainly I know the written testimony is extensive, I’d be happy to answer any questions at any time and I look forward to working with you this session.

REP. WALKER (93RD): Thank you and thank you for your -- for being the last person and wrapping it up.

JULIA WILCOX: It’s an honor.

REP. WALKER (93RD): At least for tonight and I appreciate all the work that you’ve done over the years. You’ve done a fantastic job in your advocacy, so thank you very much for all of that. Nobody is going to ask you question because I think I’ll kill them. Have a good evening and a safe drive home.

JULIA WILCOX: Thank you.

REP. WALKER (93RD): With that, I don’t think there’s anybody else that has to -- Is there anybody else that wants to testify now? Thank you very much all. I now close the public hearing on the conservation development today for appropriations. Everybody have a safe drive home.