

Housing Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6554

AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR CERTAIN HOMELESSNESS

Title: RESPONSE PROGRAMS.

Vote Date: 3/2/2023

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Change of Reference to Appropriations

PH Date: 2/2/2023

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Housing Committee
Rep. Robin Comey
Rep. Jeff Currey
Rep. Jillian Gilchrest
Rep. Dominique Johnson
Rep. David Michel
Rep. Anthony Nolan
Rep. Kadeem Roberts
Rep. Travis Simms
Rep. Gary Turco
Rep. Kerry Wood
Sen. Saud Anwar
Sen. Herron Gaston

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill provides more funding for various programs designed to fight homelessness. 2022 saw the first increase in Connecticut's homeless population in a decade. Connecticut's existing homelessness organizations are seeing their workloads increase without an increase in funding. This bill provides organizations the funding needed to adequately handle the recent workload increases.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None Expressed

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

United Way of Connecticut, CEO, Lisa Tepper Bates: Ms. Tepper Bates testified that Connecticut's 211 service has been overwhelmed by the recent surge in demand. According to Ms. Tepper Bates, there has been a 56% increase in calls related to homelessness to 211 since 2017. Currently, 211 does not have the resources to shoulder this increase in workload. Ms. Tepper Bates testified that the increase in funding provided by this bill would be enough to staff 211 for 24-hour service

Several speakers testified to how important additional funds would be to the ongoing operation of homelessness organizations. These speakers testified to difficulties finding adequate staffing with their current funding. This lack of staffing has made the increase in workload even more unmanageable. These testifiers believe additional funding would alleviate the workforce shortage problem and allow their organizations to run more efficiently.

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- **Bridge House, Housing and Advocacy Coordinator, William Acosta**
- **CT Coalition against Domestic Violence, Director of Public Policy & Communications, Liza Andrews**
- **Chrysalis Center Inc., Director of Supportive Housing, Deanna Bencivengo**
- **Hands On Hartford, Co-Director of Housing, Homeless Prevention, & Outreach Programs, Stephanie Boyce**
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness CT Chapter, Public Policy and Affiliates Relations Manager, Thomas Burr**
- **New Beginnings Gathering Place, Director, Nancy Cannavo**
- **Domestic Violence Crisis Center, Advocacy Navigator, Camila Cardona**
- **Always Home Inc., Executive Director, Tricia Cunningham**
- **Open Doors, Development & Donor Manager, Maria Davis**
- **Friends in Service to Humanity of Northwestern CT, Executive Director, Deirdre DiCara**
- **Northwestern CT YMCA, Director of Operations, Willem Donahue**
- **Inspirica, Chief Program Officer, Rian Drenzek**
- **Keep the Promise Coalition, Coordinator and Community Organizer, Jordan Fairchild**
- **The Connection Inc., Senior Vice President of Programs, Teresa Ferraro**
- **Homes with Hope, Director of Resource Development, Katie Fitzmaurice**
- **Partnership for Strong Communities, Senior Policy Advisor, Sean Ghio**
- **Community Housing Advocates, Director of Quality Assurance, Amanda Gordon**
- **Common Ground Learning Center, Manager, Dyana Hagen**
- **Journey Home, Homeless Youth and Employment Manager, Gerilyn Harrison**
- **Desegregate CT, Director, Pete Harrison**
- **New London Homeless Hospitality Center, Homeless Outreach worker, David Horst**
- **Mercy Housing and Shelter Corporation, Team Supervisor, Shefia Ibrahim**
- **Greenwich YWCA, President, Mary Lee Kiernan**
- **CT Coalition to End Homelessness, CEO, Evonne Klein**
- **Youth Continuum Inc, CEO, Paul Kosowsky**
- **Liberty Community Services Inc., CFO, Eileen Krause**
- **New Reach Inc., Recovery Support Specialist, Julia Lawler**
- **Prime Time House Inc., Director of Housing, Adam Lytton**

- Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, Steering Committee Chair, Sue Murphy
- Homes with Hope, Marketing Manager, Katharine Murray
- Eastern CT Coordinated Access Network, Project Manager, Jaime Parker
- Columbus House, Director of Housing Services, Caroline Perez
- The Housing Collective, CEO, David Rich
- Friendship Service Center Inc., Executive Director, Caitlin Rose
- Association of Religious Communities, Executive Director, Ari Rosenberg
- The Open Hearth Association, CEO, Marilyn Rossetti
- Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen, Program Manager, Evan Serio
- CT Community Nonprofit Alliance, Senior Public Policy Advisor, Jeff Shaw
- Center for Children's Advocacy, Director of Operations, Stacey Violante Cote

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Anonymous: This testifier was concerned about the lack of accountability for the funds being appropriated. The testifier believed these funds will not be spent in a responsible way, which will result in the same process of organizations asking for more money. This testifier would like to see more organizational changes to Connecticut's approach to homelessness, as they believe more funding will just be a band aid.

Reported by: Sam Gilberti

Date: 3/23/23