



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A Healthcare Service Agency

NED LAMONT
GOVERNOR

NANCY NAVARRETTA, MA, LPC, NCC
COMMISSIONER

Testimony of Nancy Navarretta, MA, LPC, NCC, Commissioner
Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services
Before the Appropriations Committee
February 21, 2023

Good morning Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Nancy Navarretta, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and I appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of Governor's Bill 6659, AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2025 AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

DMHAS is a health care agency whose mission is to promote the overall health and wellness of adult persons with behavioral health needs through coordinated and comprehensive mental health and substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery supports. The Department is an essential partner in ensuring the safety of communities through the identification and management of risks related to mental illness and substance use. In FY 2022, the agency served approximately 95,300 persons living with a mental health or substance use condition.

The DMHAS statewide system of care is a public/private partnership which delivers a full continuum of mental health and substance use services, including inpatient, outpatient, prevention and recovery support services provided by both state-operated facilities and 144 contracted non-profit community-based agencies. The DMHAS system of care includes 13 Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAS) and two distinct hospitals in Middletown: Connecticut Valley Hospital (CVH) and Whiting Forensic Hospital (WFH). Through this system of care, DMHAS partners with individuals to deliver services to meet their needs and create a pathway to a safe, dignified, and meaningful life in the community of their choice.

The Governor's proposed budget contains a number of critical new investments that will allow DMHAS to better execute our mission of promoting wellness, preventing illness, and strengthening a recovery-oriented system of care for people with serious psychiatric and substance use conditions as well as supports expansion of vital behavioral health services to individuals who rely on the Department's system of care. The Department appreciates the Governor's support and looks forward to working with legislators as the session continues.

In particular, the Governor's budget proposal includes the following adjustments to our FY 2023 appropriations:

- \$5.3 million over the biennium will support full implementation of the requirements for the new federally-mandated 988 Suicide Hotline; including 24/7 coverage at United Way and compliance with the 15-second response time for calls and chat/text required by federal law.
- \$2.4 million in FY 2024 and \$3.4 million in FY 2025 will support cannabis prevention activities including media campaigns, secret shopper programs and grants to local prevention coalitions that will pilot cannabis prevention strategies.
- \$2.8 million in each year will fund caseload growth in the Discharge and Diversion program to fund community placements for individuals discharged from inpatient settings who need highly specialized programs and supports in the community.
- \$500,000 in FY 2024 and \$1.5 million in FY 2025 will support caseload increases in the Young Adult Services program for individuals who require a specialized community-based residential setting.
- \$1.9 million over the biennium will support 30 new Money Follows the Person placements each year of the biennium.
- \$28.8 million will annualize cost of living increases provided to our private non-profits in FY 2022 and FY 2023
- An additional \$6.1 million in ARPA funding will support several critical behavioral health initiatives initiated in FY 2023 that were previously funded under ARPA and the funding was due to expire during FY 2025. These include: 24/7 coverage in privately-provided mobile crisis teams, services for individuals awaiting treatment post-crisis, expanded respite bed capacity for the forensic population, and funding for wrap-around services for individuals who received new housing vouchers from the Department of Housing.
- \$739,000 in FY 2024 and \$184,750 in FY 2025 to maintain shuttle services at Bridgeport Mental Health Center during construction of the new parking garage expected to be completed in early FY 2025.
- Transitions \$2 million in funding from the Personal Services account to the Professional Services account to reflect anticipated costs in the biennium due to difficulties recruiting and retaining doctors,
- Reallocates \$1.2 million from the Substance Use Disorder Waiver Reserve account in the Department of Social Services to the Grants for Substance Abuse Services account to enhance funding for Pregnant Parenting Women programs to assure the state maintains

existing access and can develop additional capacity and support rate adjustments related to changes in bed capacity at various SUD residential programs.

DMHAS will continue to integrate its focus on Connecticut's response to the opioid epidemic into its integrated network of holistic, comprehensive, effective, and efficient mental health and substance use services and recovery supports that foster dignity, respect, and self-sufficiency. Our services and supports are culturally responsive, attentive to trauma—built on personal, family and community strengths—and prioritize promoting each person's recovery and full citizenship. Integral to all services and supports is an emphasis on prevention, identifying and managing risk, and promoting safety.

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

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