Dear Friends,

Who would have thought last March that we would still be in the grips of the pandemic? When the pandemic hit, Columbus House’s emergency shelter, street outreach and housing teams in New Haven and Middletown, overwhelmingly made up of black women and men, stepped up and went to work every day. They showed up at the emergency shelters despite the risk to themselves and their families. They showed up at the encampments. They showed up at the Drop-In Center. They showed up to get as many people housed as possible. They showed because of their compassion for our clients and out of necessity to provide for their families. They showed up to do the essential work to keep our communities safe from the spread of COVID-19.

Fortunately, because of a federal program, Columbus House has been able to provide essential workers with additional “hazard pay” throughout the pandemic. Without the ability to provide additional pay, there was a real fear that some of our essential staff might determine that the risk to their health and that of their family simply wasn’t worth the pay rate they were receiving. As of July 1st, the hazard pay for Columbus House’s essential workers will end. Twice this session, Columbus House asked the Appropriations Committee to make a significant increase to the homeless services budgets and to restructure our contracts as described in proposed Senate Bill 340. By doing so, they would be conveying to a group of primarily black & brown public servants that their state values their essential work more than the minimum wage they were paid before the pandemic. We reminded them that if their work is important enough to warrant early vaccination, then their work is important enough to earn a living wage. State employees and grocery store clerks can expect hazard pay for their essential work; why not people keeping emergency shelters open during a time of crisis?

Cheryl Gomes, Columbus House Shelter Case Manager, retired state employee and Ordained Chaplain who recently joined the Columbus House team described her experience this way: “I was surprised to witness the hard and dedicated work the staff provide to meet the needs of our clients. They show up every day regardless of weather, or the devastating pandemic situation. They work twice as hard for nearly half of the pay of a state employee.”
Hazard pay for essential workers is just one example of how the value of work provided by homeless services providers goes underfunded by the state. In order to fix this long-standing problem, we need a significant increase in the DOH and DMHAS budget for homeless services, and we need structural change to the way the value of those services is calculated and paid.

The Alliance for Community Nonprofits request to increase funding for nonprofits would add approximately $3.8 million to the DOH budget. That would be a start, but it is simply not enough. The reforms outlined in proposed S.B. 340 would require the state to start its funding of homeless services with a calculation of the value of the service being provided. This reform would allow homeless service providers the opportunity to advocate for funding based on the work we actually do, rather than on last year’s annual contract. Without this reform and a significantly larger budget increase than that called for by the Alliance, we face a staffing cliff in July when essential workers serving the homeless would be correct to conclude that there are easier ways to make minimum wage.

I look forward to working together with you to demand that the state fund the professional services we provide adequately so that our staff members are not our next clients.

Yours truly,

Margaret Middleton
Columbus House CEO

Legislation Updates

Housing as a Right is Closer to Becoming a Reality

We are excited to announce that the Housing Committee voted on Tuesday to pass **S.B. 194, An Act Establishing a Right to Housing** out of Committee and to the floor of the Senate. The bill establishes that it would be the goal of the state to progressively implement policies that will respect, protect, and fulfill a right to affordable housing for every resident of our state. If passed into law, this bill would make Connecticut the first state in the nation to recognize housing as a human right.

The bill now moves to the floor of the Senate where it is expected to have a potential vote in the coming weeks.

**Action Needed - Contact your representative and tell them to support S.B. 194.**

Feel free to use our [Fact Sheet](#) and [Bill Summary](#) to include useful data in your letter. Please explain why this bill is important to you and your community.
If you need assistance with your letter or need additional information please contact Sarah Fox at sfox@cceh.org.

**Justice Reinvestment Rally**

On Wednesday, March 10th the Justice Reinvestment Coalition held a rally at the Capitol in support for **S.B. 987**, An Act Concerning Reinvestment of Savings Achieved Through a Reduction in Correctional Facility Population Into Reentry and Community-based Services and Programs.

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People Not Prisons! The rallying cry heard outside the Capitol. Coalition members provide personal stories and advocate for criminal justice reform.
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The Judiciary Committee heard public testimony on Wednesday March 10th on S.B. 987 and other criminal justice reform bills. CCEH is advocating for Creation of a ‘reentry housing assistance’ line item within the Department of Correction budget and reallocate no less than $2 million annually to contract with community-based organizations to provide housing-related case management, housing search and navigation, temporary rental assistance, and other basic needs for any inmate assessed as needing reentry housing assistance.

Please email Sarah Fox at sfox@cceh.org if you need further information.

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**#IamEssential Campaign**

We are thrilled to see that many of you have started posting and re-posting content for the #IamEssential campaign in your social media accounts. We have also received a lot of your photos and quotes and will continue to publish them on social media in support of **S.B. 340, An Act Concerning Funding for Housing Services**.

These are sample posts that will be published on our social media account next week.
Please continue to send your photos and quotes to Allan Vega at avega@cceh.org. The quote should reflect why this work is important. We will tag your organization in every post, so you can repost it. Please make sure you use the hashtags: #IamEssential and #SB340. Thank you for being a partner in this effort.

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**Become a CCEH Member**

CCEH is a coalition organization, and we could not do the work we do without a strong and varied group of members.

Last year we were honored to provide our members with support in the face of an unprecedented pandemic, including supplies and financial reimbursement. We also established a Members Advocacy Roundtable, to ensure that our members are actively involved as we craft our legislative agenda. Finally, we continue to offer significant discounts to our members on trainings throughout the year.

We aim to keep member dues affordable, and the 2021 price will remain **$225**. We also kindly ask our members to Sponsor the Annual Training Institute for an additional $100 if possible.

To renew your membership, or become a member for the first time, please click [here](#).

**We ask that you confirm your membership by March 15 to be considered a Member for 2021.**

If you have any questions, please contact Ryan Beach at rbeach@cceh.org.

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**“Proud to Count” LGBTQ+ Community Survey Available Now**

The Connecticut LGBTQ+ Health & Human Services Network is currently conducting a Community Survey to find out what services and supports our Connecticut LGBTQ+ community needs. This is the first survey of its kind to address the broad-scale needs of our state’s entire LGBTQ+ community, rather than focusing on specific towns or identity groups. The Network will share the results with community organizations, donors, and local and state government to make lasting change on a community and state level. The 15-30 minute survey addresses feelings of physical and emotional safety, connection to the
community, experiences accessing support services, and some basic demographic information. It is available in both English and Spanish and is completely anonymous.

Please click here to take the survey. Share it with your LGBTQ+ friends, family, and networks! Together we can make our voices heard to create the lasting change Connecticut’s LGBTQ+ community needs to thrive and meet physical and emotional needs.

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**HMIS Update**

The annual Point-In-Time Count numbers are getting finalized and will be posted on our website very soon!

In addition, there are several updates to the HMIS including the addition of annual assessment alerts to inform staff when a client assessment is due, new columns on the By Name List to assist CAN managers, and new fields on the reservations schedule export and view to assist CAN navigators to more quickly find clients. Please click here to see the Release Notes for full details.

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**My Town Cares Updates**

We were thrilled to have so many municipal employees interested in getting involved in My Town Cares, CCEH’s partnership with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and Sustainable CT to engage towns in ending homelessness locally and around the state.

CCEH and Sustainable CT will be offering a Shelter Diversion training on March 18th that will address strategies to prevent homelessness at the front door by helping people identify immediate alternative housing arrangements to shelter and, if necessary, connecting them with services and financial assistance to help them return to permanent housing. Please click here to register.

You can also join Sustainable CT Coffee Hour for an informal discussions the third Friday of each month. They will share program updates and resources, explore your questions, and strengthen the network of Sustainable CT champions. These sessions are open to all and will be recorded. Please click here to register.

For background information on this campaign please click here.

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**Assessment of Community Data Needs Around Homelessness**

The Reaching Home Data and Accountability (D&A) Workgroup would like your feedback on how data around homelessness are being used and where there may be unmet data needs. The D&A Workgroup will analyze the survey data and use this information to prioritize data initiatives and identify resources to implement these initiatives. We strongly encourage as many people as possible throughout the housing and homeless service system in Connecticut to take this survey.
Please click here to access the survey. It should take less than 10 minutes to complete. Feel free to share the survey link with colleagues and others in your network. Please complete the survey by March 15th.

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**Your Voice Matters to Us! Join the CT Race Equity Network (CT REN) Today**

CT REN is looking for new members!

The purpose of the CT REN is to advance the work of centering race equity in efforts to address housing and homelessness disparities in Connecticut. It provides a platform for stakeholders to share, collaboratively develop, and coordinate anti-racist projects and initiatives that advance racially-equitable housing outcomes.

Our intent is to create a safe space for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color. Allies are welcomed.

**Applications are due by Monday, March 22nd, 2021.** Please feel free to share the flyer broadly within your network. Click here to apply.

We look forward to being in community with you all!

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**COVID-19 Vaccine Resources for Homeless Shelter Providers**

CCEH and our members has helped ensure that the current phase of Connecticut’s COVID-19 vaccine distribution include residents and staff of homeless shelters.

Connecticut shelters began receiving the COVID-19 vaccine as part of the Governor's plan to serve congregate settings through Phase 1b. Several shelters have been served with many more scheduled in the coming weeks. CCEH continues to coordinate with DOH to monitor progress in reaching this key population. Please click here if you want more information on vaccine access for congregate settings.

CCEH encourages you to monitor communications on the State's website. Please also feel free to contact us at info@cceh.org (Subject: COVID-19 vaccines) if you need more information or need any assistance.

Please utilize the following resources from HUD for your organization:
How to Build Staff Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccine
Preparing Staff for the COVID-19 Vaccine: Communication and Confidence Checklist
Preparing Staff for the COVID-19 Vaccine: Meeting Template
COVID-19 Vaccination Conversation Tips for Homeless Service Providers

We also encourage shelter providers to check the CDC's toolkit for additional valuable resources.

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Resources for Providers

Remote Supervision Tips for Homeless System Providers (HUD)
Rapid Rehousing Ramp up (HUD)
Guide to Using the IRS Non-Filers Tool to Get an Economic Impact Payment (IRS)

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How You Can Help

Our providers need your help! This site includes ways you can join Connecticut's homeless response.

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Webinars & Additional Guidance

With information about COVID rapidly evolving, keeping up-to-date is more important than ever. Stay up-to-date by visiting CCEH’s COVID Guidance Page, located at cceh.org/covid19.

Upcoming Trainings:

Advanced Motivational Interviewing and Case Planning Workshop
Tuesday, March 16 & Friday, March 19
9 A.M. - 12 P.M.

Join the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness and international author, Raymond Chip Tafrate, PhD, for fast-paced, virtual, interactive learning sessions that will focus on cutting-edge applications of Motivational Interviewing. Participants will increase their overall MI proficiency by participating in advanced exercises targeting the core skills of reflecting and summarizing. Participants will fine-tune their ability to recognize, reinforce, and respond to key client verbalizations to set the stage for developing an effective case plan. Register now.

Shelter Diversion 101 Training
Thursday, March 18th
11 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.
This webinar will thoroughly discuss the practice of shelter diversion; including staying housing focused, how to conduct a diversion conversation, how to access diversion funding, linkage to services and community resources, and special considerations to have during the COVID-19 crisis. Register now.

Equal Access to Shelter Training
Thursday, March 23rd
1 P.M. - 3 P.M.

Transgender individuals are significantly more likely to experience homelessness at some point in their life than the general population. Many do not enter the shelter, but the majority of those who have stayed in a homeless shelter have reported some form of mistreatment, including harassment and refusal of service, due to their gender identity. This must stop! CT Coalition to End Homelessness has partnered with CT Department of Housing, CT Fair Housing Center, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), and Anchor Health Initiative to provide you with an ‘Equal Access to Shelter’ training. Register now.

Shelter Diversion 2.0 Training
Thursday, April 8th
11 A.M. - 12:30 P.M.

Join us for this advanced diversion training that will thoroughly discuss the practice of shelter diversion, with an emphasis on how to have efficient and effective diversion conversions in a person-centered, trauma-informed, and housing-focused way. During this training we will also focus on the importance of problem solving, diversion funding, and linkage to services and community resources. Register now.

This Week’s Featured Webinar:

Addressing Vaccine Hesitancy and COVID-19

Previously Recorded Webinars:

- Working with Youth
- My Town Cares
- PIT 'People Count' Training in the PIT Database
- Reporting the Unsheltered Homeless Population
- PIT 2021: Using the new PIT Outreach Program
Shelter Diversion 101 Training
Cleaning Up Your System Performance Measures
Rights of and Resources for the Most Vulnerable Populations

Please click here to access our entire webinar catalog.

CCEH in the News

Committee Debates Housing As A Human Right Bill
NBC Connecticut | March 2021

Committee on Housing to hold hearing Thursday on right to housing bill
The Day | March 2021