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**Testimony before the Public Hearing on:**  
**H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2021**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Steven Girelli, and I am the President and CEO of Klingberg Family Centers. We are a multiservice agency based in New Britain with sites in Hartford, Wethersfield, and Terryville. Klingberg's mission is to help build healing relationships that empower children and families to reach their full potential. We pursue that mission through the provision of over 20 programs and services that last year helped nearly 2500 children and their families from 60 towns and cities throughout central Connecticut. We employ nearly 350 staff, also representing towns throughout central Connecticut: 65 towns, in fact.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2021.

Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving people in need and employing tens of thousands. They are what make Connecticut a great place to live and work.

Since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding, which has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased costs and demand for services over the last thirteen years. I am here to respectfully request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits.

I ask that you:

1. Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2025;
2. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2021, which is a 7% increase;
3. And, going forward, index increases to inflation to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

The inadequacy of state funding negatively impacts our agency, our staff, and most importantly the children and families of Connecticut whom we serve. Most significantly, inadequate funding has contributed to staff turnover rates that have exceeded one-third over the past several years. The vast majority of these staff indicate that they are leaving due to compensation that fails to meet their basic needs. Turnover rates of this magnitude obviously create tremendous challenges, both financial and otherwise, for any organization. Inadequate

funding impedes our ability to maintain a workforce with the high level of skills necessary to meet the needs of our service population.

Klingberg invests tremendous resources in training our staff, both in the cost of trainers and in the cost of compensating staff for training time. However, adequate state funding would allow us to increase our staff training to meet the growing demands of the clients we serve. Moreover, the training that we are currently able to provide is wasted when trained staff resign for more lucrative positions elsewhere, often leaving the field of children's behavioral health all together.

For our agency and others like it, staff turnover creates an additional obstacle that is not so obvious or common. Ninety-five percent of the children and families that we serve struggle with the aftermath of trauma, often times of horrific proportion and occurring at the most vulnerable stages in a child's development. And research has demonstrated with overwhelming reliability that the most critical factor in the treatment of trauma is the relationship between the trauma survivor and their caretakers and treatment providers. The healing relationship is characterized by compassion, respect, hope, and connection. These relationships take considerable time to develop in the best of situations. However, a core feature of the type of trauma we typically treat—trauma that occurs at an early age, often repeatedly, and often in the context of what should have been a loving, protective relationship—is that the survivor has an extremely difficult time opening up to the possibility of the kind of trusting, emotionally safe relationship necessary for healing. Thus, our ability to most effectively treat trauma is undermined.

I urge you to support H.B. 5005 and on behalf of my staff and the children and families that we serve, I thank you for your time and consideration.