

**Appropriations Committee Health Subcommittee
Public Hearing
Friday, February 21, 2020
4:00pm in Room 2C of the LOB**

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative DiMassa; Representative Horn; Senator Formica and Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee: My name is Anne Ruwet, CEO of CCARC, Inc. serving over 200 people with Intellectual Disabilities in the Greater New Britain Community. I am here to comment on the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2021. Our message is simple - it is critical to protect the essential community services that are provided to people with disabilities.

Since 2007, **community nonprofits have lost at least \$461 million in state funding** that has **not** kept pace with inflation. You have the opportunity this year to do what is right and allocate \$461 million over the next five years to stabilize our community providers! **Appropriate \$128 million in new funding for community nonprofits in FY21**, (a state net cost of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) a 7% increase; and then **Index rates to inflation** to ensure that state funding will better keep pace with increased costs in the future. If not now when!

We continue to sign contracts with the State of Connecticut recognizing that the amounts of the contracts are underfunded and do not pay for the full cost of care. These contracts represent millions of dollars and provide the necessary services to our most vulnerable citizens who would otherwise be provided by state operated services with costs that triple our costs. You might ask why would we do this – and the answer is that the people we support and their families depend on us, and as human service providers we have somehow made it work. Unfortunately, this good will not continue without risking the stability of our nonprofit community providers.

I am disappointed the Governor's proposal has no line item for conversion of DDS state-operated services to the nonprofit sector and no increase to community providers for our corroding system! I urge the Committee to be bold and put \$461 million over the next five years to rebuilding and investing in this important system of care. You may not know but DDS has only 33 public group homes remaining in the state while 850 group homes are supported by the Private Providers. Last year the legislature passed a bill to ensure that all DDS Direct Support Professionals receive \$14.75/hour and there was hope it would help with retention. Our data supports that it has not helping with retention especially when the state pays \$23/hour for the exact same work and an Aldi's pays \$17/hour. This is morally and ethically very wrong to have this disparity.

It has been over 25 years that I have been advocating for people with disabilities before this legislative with no increases in 15 years! I'm tired but still committed to the fight and if it means joining together with my fellow providers to take legal action against the state I am ready! It worked for the hospitals.... **again, I say to you if not now, When? Thank you...**

Respectfully - Anne L. Ruwet, CEO