



Appropriations Health Subcommittee Public Hearing on Friday February 21, 2019 regarding:

H.B. 5005: An Act Adjusting the State Budget for The Biennium Ending June 30, 2021

Testimony of Marian Leist, Vice President of Advocacy & Business Development for Harc, Inc.

February 20, 2020

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am Marian Leist, Vice President of Advocacy & Business Development for Harc Inc., a community service provider that supports over 1000 individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families in the Greater Hartford Region.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2021. I support appropriating an additional \$461 million over 5 years to community services.

Last Friday, our organization had our annual day of advocacy, "Have a Harc Day" at the Legislative Office Building. The participants and families who attended told their stories and, after years of chronic underfunding, were encouraged to hear from legislators who understand the importance and positive impact of our services. There is an acute need for additional funding and the very fabric of our community is at stake if we do not invest in community services. I ask you to be a champion for the families and individuals that we support on a daily basis.

Over the last couple of months, our organization made the difficult decision of closing our Individual Day Supports Program. This program provided 1:1 supports to individuals for whom group day services are not appropriate due to medical or behavioral health reasons. Due to inadequate reimbursement rates, we were unable to continue providing this service, which requires a significant level of oversight and documentation of services in 15-minute intervals.

This particular program is very close to my heart, since I oversaw it when we first started almost 10 years ago. While it was hard for me to let it go, it is even harder for the 15 individuals we supported and for their families who are now forced to find alternative programming or face having no support at all.

This is not the only program impacted. Our recreation programs are virtually non-existent and our family supports services are extinct. These ancillary programs for which there is no state government funding have been cut off because our fundraising efforts focus of making up for the gap between provider reimbursement rates and the actual cost of services.

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.



Despite inadequate funding, the nonprofit community has routinely been asked to be creative and innovative and we have risen to this challenge every time. The bottom line is that we simply cannot continue to operate without being compensated for the actual cost of services. Individuals and families across the state are at risk for losing their support network. As a legislature, you have been faced with budgetary challenges before and have used your innovative abilities to find the resources when needed. For community nonprofit providers, the time is now. To quote one of our participants from Have a Harc Day on Friday, "I think we are going to do a lot of great things this session." So let's start by investing in the services that support our community.

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

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, a 7% increase;*
3. *Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.*

Specifically in regards to the DDS/DSS budgets:

- Please support the Governor's proposal in the DSS and DDS budgets to create an incentive payment model to help move people with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities into less intensive and more appropriate levels of care.
 - Please ensure that this new program furthers the creation of a better continuum of care that provides the proper services for everyone who is eligible for them.
 - Please also do not just use the savings it creates to balance the budget, instead taking the opportunity to reinvest that savings into increasing rates and/or moving people off the waiting list.
- Please oppose the Governor's proposal to cut \$2 million from the Behavioral Support Program. The Governor's budget says that cut reflects "natural attrition." If that is the case, the funding should be reinvested to increase rates for those services.

Respectfully,

Marian Leist
Vice President,
Advocacy & Business Development
Harc, Inc.