



Good evening Representative Walker, Senator Osten, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Joyce Lewis. I am the Executive Vice President of Key Human Services, Inc. a private nonprofit business supporting individuals with disabilities across the lifespan statewide.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005. I am here today to thank you for the funding last year to raise our Direct Care Professionals' wages to \$14.75/hour. This increase has changed the lives of so many of our employees. Thank you! This was an important step in recognizing the importance of the work they do every day. Their work is not minimum wage work.

Today I ask you to take the next step- to fund the differential wage increase as the minimum wage increases. The differential established last year recognizes the responsibility inherent in the work. At Key, our mission is to "Act as a change agent...". Our Direct Support Professionals are called upon to intentionally seek out opportunities to facilitate independence and connection to the community that suits the skills and interests of the individuals they support. Again, their work is not minimum wage work. Please don't let the minimum wage increases erode the commitment made last year to these crucial workers.

On another note, as the Department of Developmental Services implements Electronic Visit Verification this year, I ask you to fund the infrastructure necessary for providers to undertake this additional mandate. Our agency currently uses EVV with our Autism waiver work and knows firsthand the administrative time required for this process let alone the startup costs of electronic devices, data entry and training. Rate increases are necessary to support the ongoing costs of administrative review and resubmission. . Additionally, when using this process with people living on their own, it is important to bring your own device as the person may not wish to share their phone. Each staff in our mobile workforce has an electronic device with cellular service.

For these reasons, a rate increase is necessary to support this additional requirement. It has been suggested that EVV will be a cost saving addition. However, if indeed there are any cost

savings these would be realized at the state level, based on a failure to pay for services rendered but with exceptions.

There are no cost savings for providers just costs. Please increase the rates to support these underfunded programs that enhance the independent lives of the individuals that we support.

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.

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:

Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2025;
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;
Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

Thank you for your consideration!

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