

Senator Will Haskell and Representative Lucy Dathan,

As someone who is as you well know passionately involved in local, state, and federal politics and intimately familiar with the financial crisis our state continues to face, I am proud to learn the budget will experience a surplus on the heels of a modest, growing rainy day fund. I credit not only you, my hardworking elected officials, but your colleagues and the rest of the delegation including Governor Ned Lamont for this overdue fiscal accountability.

With this in mind, I oppose the Governor's recommended \$1 million cut to Community Residential Services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Any funds averted upon a resident's choice to move from a higher cost to a lower cost setting should be used explicitly to serve those on waiting lists for residential supports.

Additionally, I oppose the Governor's recommended \$2 million cut to the Behavioral Services Program (BSP) which provides support to families and individuals between the ages of age eight and 21 with I/DD and a serious, persistent mental health disorder that substantially interferes with their functioning in family or community activities.

Finally, I support the CT Community Nonprofits Alliance's 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.

This has resulted in program closures, waiting lists, and staffing shortages that impact lives of people with I/DD and the supports they rely on to live in the community, as they have every right and deserve to do.

As a disabled woman and sister to a woman with an I/DD and complex medical history, I am extremely disappointed - though not surprised - to see the needs of disabled individuals put last. My family is extremely fortunate in our ability to provide my sister's supports privately, and that she is happy and safe to live with her family. Many of her friends are on seemingly endless waiting lists, with the demise of their caregivers the only hope for them to be offered a more appropriate home. These parents, like my own and like myself, live with a constant angst as regards her future and her wellbeing should – and when – we become unable to care for her.

The surplus despite these cuts to necessary services is the face to the de-prioritization and dehumanization disabled people experience every moment of their lives. It is a tragedy and a civil rights issue Connecticut could choose to help eradicate should the state not balance the budget on the backs of our most vulnerable. Lest we forget these budget implications and allocations directly impact Connecticut residents deserving of the same regard as any other constituent, I urge you to consider these cuts with gravitas. Not simply because the moral choice aligns most closely with constitutional rights, but because we can and should strive to be a model to other states.

Thank you for your time,
Alyssa MacKenzie
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Senate District 26
Assembly District 142