



Public Hearing on:

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

I would like to thank the members of the appropriation committee for your consideration of our concerns regarding The State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2021,

I am Cheryl Bergstrom, Residential Director of STAR, Serving people with Intellectual Disabilities in Norwalk, Wilton Weston, Westport, Darien and New Canaan.

"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 have worked for Private Providers serving people with Intellectual Disabilities for 40 years. I have seen how unfunded mandates, budget cuts and overall lack of funding has negatively impacted services for our most vulnerable citizens.

This pattern of chronic underfunding has increasingly made it impossible for Private Providers to hire an adequate amount of staff to serve our population. We can no longer meet the needs of the individuals with intellectual disabilities, families have choice and request our services but we must turn them down. This is an increasingly growing issue brought on by the failure to be able to offer a competitive wage.

We often are forced to cover our homes with staff who have worked excessive overtime. In addition to working overtime for us, many staff are forced to hold multiple jobs. This predictably puts the Agency and the Residents at risk. Today I received a report from a family member that when they visited the group home this weekend the staff on duty was very ill. The staff explained they were not able to find a replacement so he could not leave the group home.

Lack of adequate funding = lack of adequate staffing = RISK OF HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR CITIZENS with INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

I am respectfully requesting that the legislature appropriate at least \$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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Cheryl Bergstrom'.

2/19/2020