

TESTIMONY DDS BUDGET HEARING  
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
CT GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
FEBRUARY 21, 2020

ESTEEMED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE: MY NAME IS PATRICK JOHNSON AND I LIVE IN WEST HARTFORD. I AM HERE THIS EVENING TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF MY TWO BROTHERS IN LAW. FRANCIS AND JOSEPH ARE BOTH TOTALLY BLIND AND HAVE OTHER DISABILITIES AS WELL. BOTH WILL SOON BE 70 YEARS OF AGE. MY WIFE, MARGIE, AND I ARE THEIR LEGAL GUARDIANS. JOSEPH LIVES AT ST MARY HOME IN WEST HARTFORD AND FRANCIS LIVES IN A GROUP HOME, OWNED AND MANAGED BY OAK HILL, IN MANSFIELD CT. BOTH OF THESE MEN COULD NEVER LIVE BY THEMSELVES. FRANCIS SPENT THE FIRST FORTY YEARS OF HIS LIFE AT SOUTHBURY TRAINING SCHOOL AND THE REMAINDER NOW IN HIS MANSFIELD GROUP HOME. FRANCIS IS BLIND, AUTISTIC, NONVERBAL, CAN NOT TOILET NOR FEED HIMSELF AND IS PROFOUNDLY DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED.

MARGIE AND I ARE HAUNTED BY CONCERNS ABOUT WHAT WILL BECOME OF JOSEPH AND FRANCIS IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO US AND IF THE STATE OF CT DOES NOT ADDRESS THE CHRONIC UNDERFUNDING NOW RESULTING IN PROGRAM CLOSURES, RAPID STAFF TURNOVER, NEGLECT OF INFRASTRUCTURE, INCREASED SAFETY RISK AND INCREASING DEPENDENCE ON CHARITY. CHARITY IS DECLINING SINCE IT USUALLY NO LONGER MEETS TAX DEDUCTABILITY STANDARDS. THE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS HAVE BEEN WORKING MIRACLES FOR THE PAST TWO DECADES OF DECLINING STATE REVENUE AND NOW THEY ARE COMPETING WITH FAST FOOD CHAINS FOR STAFF WHILE STATE EMPLOYEES DOING THE SAME WORK ARE MAKING ALMOST DOUBLE WHAT THEY ARE MAKING PROVIDING VERY CHALLENGING SUPPORTIVE SERVICES. THE WAITING LIST OF FAMILIES IN NEED CONTINUES TO GROW AND OUR GOVERNOR A FEW MONTHS AGO SAID CHARITABLE DONORS WILL COVER COSTS. REALLY! THAT IS AN OUTRAGEOUS 18TH CENTURY IDEA.

PLEASE DO NOT TELL PARENTS, GUARDIANS, DONORS AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS THAT THEY ARE DOING GOD'S WORK. IT MAKES ME ANGRY TO HEAR THIS EVERY YEAR FOR THE DECADES THAT I HAVE BEEN COMING HERE TO TESTIFY. SOCIETY HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE. GOVERNMENT AND ALL OF US HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS REGARD. IT MUST BE THE WORK OF ALL OF US TO DO GOD'S WORK. I DON'T BELIEVE THAT IT IS HYPERBOLIC TO SAY THAT WE ARE NOT FAR FROM PUTTING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES ON THE STREET TO BEG. WE SEE SOME OF IT ALREADY.

IN FACT NONPROFITS HAVE BECOME SURROGATE BEGERS HERE EVERY YEAR USUALLY LEAVING WITH LITTLE OR NOTHING. THUS I AM BRINGING A SYMBOL OF OUR ROLE, A HAND CRAFTED BEGING CUP USED IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY.

**THE COMMUNITY NONPROFIT HUMAN SERVICE ALLIANCE HAS AN EXCELLENT PAPER THAT THEY HAVE CIRCULATED WHICH PRESENTS THE FACTS AND HISTORY OF THE VITAL ROLE PLAYED BY NONPROFITS IN PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE GOVERNMENT DELIVERING THE VAST MAJORITY OF HUMAN SERVICES TO THE MOST ILL, VULNERABLE, AND MARGINALIZED PEOPLE IN THE STATE AT ABOUT 50% OF WHAT IT WOULD COST THE STATE AND YET THE STATE HAS A WOEFUL DISREGARD AND DISRESPECT FOR WHAT THEY DO. PLEASE DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU REALLY DO CARE OR TELL MY BROTHERS IN LAW AND THE THOUSANDS LIKE THEM AGAIN THAT NO ONE WILL HELP DESPITE THE BUDGET SURPLUSES. I INVITE ANYONE OF YOU TO COME AND VISIT MY FAMILY MEMBERS AND FOR THOSE OF YOU LEGISLATORS WHO HAVE BEEN OUR ADVOCATES AND SUPPORTERS; PLEASE ACCEPT MY HEARTFELT GRATITUDE.**

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