

Testimony of Shelagh McClure  
Before the Appropriations Committee  
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**Submitted to: [apptestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:apptestimony@cga.ct.gov)**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle, members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on **HB 5005, AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2021.**

I live in West Hartford with my husband and our 29-year old son who has Down Syndrome. For over a decade, despite the efforts of parents and advocates, the state budget for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) was decimated. The result was a system that no longer met needs once routinely met, and waiting lists for virtually all services.

Last year, for the first time in my son's adult life, I was pleased to be able, to testify in favor of the proposed DDS budget. It represented, in difficult but improving times, a good faith effort to begin restoring services to the population it is supposed to serve, and to support initiatives that promote community-based living.

This year the Governor has proposed cuts to the previously adopted budget that I urge you to reject. I am disheartened by the Governor's proposed \$1 million cut to Community Residential Services and I urge you to oppose it. The Governor has proposed shifting those funds to support additional rental assistance to support individuals living in the community. But it is being proposed as a cost saving proposal—moving individuals from higher cost settings such as group homes using rental assistance. The end result is that no additional persons are served.

I fully support additional rental assistance—but it should be used to bring individuals off the waiting list, so that more people with I/DD receive residential services. The time has come to make a serious commitment to serve more people. As the budget begins

to improve, our citizens with I/DD, who have borne the brunt of budgetary hardships, who have been waiting for years for their opportunity for a place to live in the community, have the right to demand action.

The Governor has also proposed a \$2 million cut to the Behavioral Services Program. This program, which serves individuals age 8 to 21 with I/DD and a serious and persistent mental disorder, provides services which are designed to help families stay intact. When BSP services are not available, the young person often ends up in the emergency room, with terrible outcomes for the child and the family. The BSP program always seems to be under the budget knife, yet families desperately need the services. I hope the committee will reject this proposed budget adjustment.

Finally, the CT Community Nonprofits Alliance has estimated that the nonprofit sector has lost at least \$461 million in state funding since 2007—through failure of the State to adequately cover program costs or inflation. This has resulted in program closures, staff shortages and a weakened safety net—all to the detriment of people with I/DD. I support the Nonprofit Alliance's request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over the next 5 years to strengthen the very programs that legislators know are critical to their constituents with I/DD.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on the Governor's proposed adjustments to the DDS budget. I know that you have a daunting task ahead, and that today, you are not dealing with the revenue side. However, when you are faced with the inevitable tough questions, I hope you think about the reasons you are elected, and what the core functions of government are. The individuals served by DDS are not people who have the wherewithal to withstand the loss of services and supports if the budget is cut. They are the people government is here, most critically, to serve and support. Please keep that in mind as you move forward in the budget process.