



The Arc of Litchfield County, Inc. ▪ 314 Main Street, Torrington CT 06790

Public Hearing on:

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

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Mary Ellen Kunz and I am writing on behalf of the 30 individuals residing in one of the Arc of Litchfield County's (LARC's) group homes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5005 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2021.

I oppose the Governor's recommended \$1 million cut to Community Residential Services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Any funds saved when an individual chooses to move from a higher cost setting to a lower cost setting, should be used to serve people who are on waiting lists for residential supports. I also oppose the Governor's recommended \$2 million cut to the Behavioral Services Program (BSP) which provides support to families and individuals age 8-21 with intellectual disability with a serious and persistent mental disorder that substantially interferes with their functioning in family or community activities.

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 on the lives of people with I/DD and the supports they rely on to live in the community.

Previous budget cuts and chronic underfunding have greatly contributed to the challenges of hiring and keeping qualified staff. Wages have not kept up with the cost of living and many qualified prospective employees cannot afford to work for service providers like LARC. As a result, it is difficult to find staff. Our committed and dedicated staff who have been with LARC for years are finding it more difficult to justify the low wages they make for the often very difficult and stressful work as a direct-care staff member. If LARC and other residential programs for individuals with intellectual and development disabilities continue to be challenged by the shortage of qualified staff, the state will see its list of individuals in need of housing continue to grow.

Thank you for your time.



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