

Testimony of
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**Appropriations Committee 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:

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

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 am here to respectfully **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. 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.

Clients in our communities are dying literally every day from lack of treatment for substance use and mental health. From the Hartford Courant: "Drug overdoses deaths increase by 20% in the state." 1,200 people died - yet substance use agencies have not had an increase in 7 years. How does this make sense? Intensive outpatient, which is recommended treatment to accompany Medically Assisted Treatment received a 90% cut two years ago - and the result is more people dying. If we cannot see this is a crisis that needs our attention, I am not

sure what it will take. We have a Rainy Day Fund and it's pouring! Nursing homes and hospitals received funding to support them, yet individuals with substance use and mental health disorders have not received the same support - do we want this to tell the story of what we value in CT?

At Perception Programs, we are blessed with dedicated staff to serve all of our clients but this service comes at price. Our frontline staff that are helping individuals in our residentials and providing outreach can work at Cumberland Farms down the road for more money and they do not have to endure the vicarious trauma on a daily basis. And honestly, one more year with no increases they will need to leave their jobs to provide for their families and our clients; the most vulnerable in the state; will be without case managers and residential care staff to help them.

One young lady, who was too overwhelmed to come testify tonight herself, told me that I should ask for more money to pay therapists better wages, so they don't have to always leave to find better-paying jobs. Her exact words were, "I stopped going to therapy because I could not stand to tell my trauma story over and over again to a new therapist, it wasn't helpful." This young woman is now in residential care after stopping her outpatient therapy and going off her meds. She wants consistency in her care- something she lacked in her home life as a child.