

DATE: February 21, 2020

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Kyle Majewski, Professional Development Director of Reliance Health, Inc.

RE: Appropriations Public Hearing on the Governor's Proposed FY 21 Budget Adjustments

Senator Osten and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I'm Kyle Majewski, Professional Development Director at Reliance Health in Norwich, CT.

Today, I'm writing you on behalf of the budget for Non-profits and for our company. I have seen first-hand the great impact that we have had on the South Eastern Connecticut Region.

Over the last six years, I have spent time as a Per Diem, Residential Assistant, and Employment Specialist. Each role in our agency has an impact that reaches much further than our community. Unfortunately, I feel as though we are perceived as discount mental health services in the eyes of the state. In the years I have worked in this agency I have seen our budget remain the same while our company is expected to provide more and more services and open new programs. We are held to the same standards as state service providers but expected to do so at almost half of the cost. Our staff's wages are in some cases half of those provided at the state level and many qualify for food stamps.

It pains me to see just how many staff we lose due to low wages. Many of our Program Directors work 2nd or 3rd jobs out of necessity. Today I write on behalf of the lower end of our flat pay scale. With our current budget we are struggling to get by in today's economy. Our out of pocket Health insurance costs are high for low coverage. Staff cannot count on their wages alone to cover their expenses and need to work other jobs too.

These are good people who come to work every day to make a difference in the lives of others. I find it hard to usher people into our company knowing that they may not be able to afford to work here. These are single mothers, Grads with Student Loans, and people who want to make a difference in their communities.

Reliance Health is a place that encourages growth. I have wanted my current job since I came through New Hire Orientation and I am grateful for the opportunity to do this job, now that I was finally able to afford to move out, I am finding that it is still hard to live on my current wages. Many staff are one unseen expense from going bust.

I have had many wonderful experiences working for this agency, Helping members get and hold jobs, teaching future mothers how to shop and cook, and supporting staff through their hardships. Reliance Health encouraged my education as well as my art and does the same for countless other staff and members alike.

So now I will ask. Please stop asking us to grow while not increasing our budget. Life is already hard enough with all of our charting requirements and struggles that come from assisting people suffering from mental illness. Constant Financial stress should not be a reality for our employees.

Help us to help Connecticut Grow Stronger. Please vote to increase funding for Reliance Health and the other Non-Profits that aim to help make our community better than it was yesterday.