

DATE: February 21, 2020

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Carrie Dyer, Chief Executive Officer of Reliance Health, Inc., Norwich, CT

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

Senator Osten and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Carrie Dyer and I am the CEO of Reliance Health, a nonprofit, community mental health organization serving Eastern Connecticut. We serve over 1,000 individuals a year who live at or below poverty level and who are challenged by mental health and substance use diagnoses. We employ over 250 individuals to accomplish our mission to enhance health through mental wellness. Throughout my 25 years at the agency, state budget announcements have been received with disappointment, defeat, and frustration as logic and fiscal realities are repeatedly ignored.

We are a BUSINESS stuck in a bizarre funding model. We provide services that are in high demand, yet we cannot expand to accommodate those needs. We are not permitted to modify our existing contracts to account for increased costs and mandates. We compete with our funders on an uneven playing field for programs and employees. We provide activities and data to generate revenue, yet do not receive any funds in return. We are instructed by Governor Lamont to seek philanthropic sources to bolster our budget while state issued cost standards explicitly disallow fundraising activities.

It is in our nature to be cooperative and compassionate. We are nimble and creative. We love our work. But this is simple math. Flat funding is a dismissal of the realities of operating a business. Over the past 10 years, our electronic medical record saw a 45% increase in cost (roughly \$100,000). Employee benefits increased 67% (roughly \$800,000). Gas, electricity, food, equipment, insurances, trainings, legal fees, materials...all expenses increase over time. Yet we are expected to squeeze those costs from a stagnant budget without complaint.

You know we do good work. You've presented us with official Citations and honor our contributions to the community. You attend our events and activities. You meet the people we partner with in their recovery. You see us get voted year after year as a Top Workplace by our employees. You follow our successes on social media and in the news. Yet when we ask for the support to keep up with the cost of doing business, you turn a deaf ear.

Now is the time to make things right. **We are worth it.**

Thank you for your attention.

Carrie Dyer