



February 26, 2021

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Becky Blazejowski, and I am the Chief Financial Officer at MidState Arc, Inc, a nonprofit providing supports to individuals with developmental disabilities in central Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Thereafter.

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 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 2026;
2. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net of \$67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2022, a 7% increase;
3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.
4. Hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impact of COVID-19.

The lack of adequate funding has forced us to chronically under pay staff who are working in the trenches on the front line with the state's most vulnerable constituents, especially during a pandemic. We have, and are continuing to face a severe staffing crisis, as many of our potential candidates are able to earn a more livable wage at for profit businesses that have been able to raise their revenues since 2007. The flat funding we are provided with is simply not sufficient to afford attractive wages and benefits for current and potential staff.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the impact of inadequate funding for nonprofit services and brought unanticipated and unbudgeted costs and operational challenges for many community nonprofits, such as:

- Providing hazard pay for essential workers on the front lines with a higher risk of exposure;



- Procuring expensive and hard to find Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies;
- Creating telehealth services seemingly overnight, and purchasing necessary computers, cybersecurity, online meeting platforms and training for both staff and people receiving services.
- Many community nonprofits never closed their doors even as the pandemic worsened.

No additional funding was provided by the State of Connecticut to cover additional expenses during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as any funding to pay staff who were frightened to work during the pandemic, and certainly in a program with a COVID-19 confirmed positive client who still needed our supports. Fortunately, we were the recipient of Federal funding during 2020 to cover these additional costs, however, the expenses continue in 2021, and no Federal funding has yet been made available.

Demand continues to increase as funding is cut. As a representative for over 300 people with intellectual disabilities, over half of which are living in group homes, I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to have testimony on HB 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget for The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Thereafter. We think, this year, above all others, has heightened the sense of urgency and need for adequate funding.

Sincerely,

Becky Blazejowski

Chief Financial Officer

bblazejowski@midstatearc.org

203-238-8364