

**DATE: 2/26/21**  
**TO: Human Services Committee**  
**FROM: Sherry Albert, Chief Operating Officer, Community Solutions, Inc.**  
**RE: H.B. no. 6439 Governor's FY22-23 Budget Proposal**  
**POSITION: SUPPORT FUNDING FOR NON PROFITS**

My name is Sherry Albert and I am the Chief Operating Officer at Community Solutions, Inc. (CSI). CSI serves adults, youth and families that are involved with the criminal justice and child welfare systems. We provide residential Adult Work Release Programs for offenders reentering the community from the Department of Corrections and Federal Bureau of Prisons, Alternatives In the Community (AIC) for the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division and residential and life skill programs for young people referred by the Department of Children and Families who have been abandoned, abused, neglected and/or Trafficked. We are essential workers. To date, 148 of our clients have contracted Covid -19 along with 46 employees. One of our esteemed employees, died from it.

Our clients suffer from trauma, substance abuse and addiction, mental health as well as social and racial injustices. Their education, health, housing, financial resources and family relationships are often lacking or non-existent. They need the services that CSI and many of our sister non-profits provide in order to stabilize their lives and work towards productive citizenship.

Despite these extensive needs, we are only able to pay our front line staff \$13.25/hr. Most of our staff have to have more than one job to survive. The fact is, many could work at McDonald's for more. Believe me, serving a burger to someone is a lot easier than addressing the complex needs of the clients we serve. CSI has record vacancies as it is not a survivable salary. Thirteen years ago we typically had 15 vacancies at any given time. Now we average 58. This further compromises our ability to adequately serve our clients. It increases burnout and the use of overtime which is counter to the productivity and client outcomes we are all seeking. Additionally, it is important to note that approximately 70% of our workforce are people of color. Similarly, about 70% of our clients are people of color. Continuing the trend of underfunding the non-profits should no longer be an acceptable option as we all need to advocate for, and demonstrate commitment to, eliminating systemic racism by increasing access to quality services to improve the quality of life for our most vulnerable citizens.

The legislature should increase funds to nonprofit services by \$461 million, to keep pace with increased costs and demand over the last thirteen years. The legislature should:

- Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2026;
- 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;
- Index increase to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.

We need you to please boldly do the right thing. If not now when the state has a surplus, then when?

Thank you for listening and considering adequately funding the non-profits in the great State of Connecticut.