



community
solutions, inc.

Administrative Offices
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DATE: February 26, 2021
TO: Appropriations Committee
FROM: Fernando J. Muñoz, Chief Executive Officer
RE: H.B. 6439: An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor.

Good evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Fernando Muñoz and I am the CEO of Community Solutions, Inc. Since 1962, CSI has positively impacted the lives of our clients and their communities by providing services that facilitate skill development, enhance responsible citizenship, and increase overall well-being. We do this by providing services to individuals and families involved with the criminal justice, juvenile justice and child welfare systems.

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 Therefor.

Community nonprofits like Community Solutions provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving people in need and employing tens of thousands.

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 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.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, organizations like mine have incurred significant additional costs for personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, purchasing equipment to allow for remote work, and hazard pay for staff in our residential programs. At my organization alone, these costs have exceeded \$1 Million. While foundation grants and a PPP loan allowed us to survive for the last year, unless additional funding is appropriated for non-profit organizations we may be forced to close critical services all over the state.

Chronic under-funding has had a significant negative impact on non-profit service providers. At Community Solutions, flat funding of our work release residential programs has prevented us from paying a living wage to front-line employees. These employees provide round-the-clock services and support for people re-entering the community from Connecticut's prisons and they deserve to be paid a living wage.

In addition to overall funding for non-profit service providers, I also ask that you:

Court Support Services Division

- Please oppose the reduction of \$1 million from the consolidation of the Youthful Offender Services line item into the Juvenile Alternative Incarceration line item. The consolidation proposal cuts \$1 million from the total of both lines, funding that is desperately needed to serve the population those line items fund.
- Please oppose the reduction of \$200,000 to the Alternative to Incarceration (AIC) line item. While some closures of under-utilized programs are scheduled to take place, the cost savings should be reinvested to strengthen the essential network of continuing AIC services.

Department of Correction

- Please support the proposed closure of Northern Correctional Institution and certain units, facilities, and custody-post adjustments. The proposal will achieve savings of \$20 million in FY2022 and \$46.9 million in FY2023. However, legislature should reinvest these savings into recidivism reduction, prison alternatives, and support for victims of crime, in keeping with the nationally-supported "Justice Reinvestment Reform" initiatives, rather than using them to balance the budget.
- Please support the proposed reduction in cost for inmate telephone calls. The exorbitant cost for this critical communication negatively impacts the ability for prisoners to remain in contact with their families and supports within the community. These communications are essential components to successful reentry.