

Testimony of Carol Breslin

H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023 And Making Appropriations Therefor.

Health Subcommittee

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

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

My name is Carol Breslin, I am a Program Manager at Journey Found and I have worked in the area of supporting people with intellectual and Developmental Challenges for my entire career. I have worked as a Direct Support staff, a Manager/Administrator, a volunteer and currently act as guardian for people with intellectual challenges. This is a field and topic that is very important to me.

Thank you for letting me testify on H.B 6439 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023 and Making Appropriations Therefor.

Not for Profit Agencies provide essential services to people in every town and city in Connecticut. Community agencies fill a vital need and provide employment to tens of thousands of people. I respectfully request the legislature to **appropriate \$461 million dollars over five years for community nonprofits**. Since 2007 community agencies have lost at least \$461 million dollars through the underfunding of organizations for increasing overhead expenses and failing to consider inflation in funding. This directly impacts each agencies ability to provide the high quality services we demand of ourselves and our ability to expand services to people who need and qualify for supports.

I have been employed as a Float Staff and then as a Program Manager during this pandemic year. I have worked directly with people served in situations which put my own health and the health of my family members at risk. I have worked extraordinary hours, without complaint, in order to cover shifts left open due to staffing shortages and illness. I recently commented to a family member that I had "only" worked 58 hours one week and felt like I was on vacation. Work weeks in excess of 80 hours have been common this year.

The work that we do is skilled labor. The wages paid don't reflect that; for \$15 an hour people can work at a number of other jobs that require much less commitment and training. This work requires hands on care, there is no opportunity to social distance. Staff have to be hyper vigilant to ensure the safety of the folks we support as well as their own safety and that of their coworkers. The people we support in community residences and day programs are at increased risk for severe illness and death from COVID. In addition, staff have responsibilities beyond personal care, cooking and cleaning. We run the house, pay the bills, keep track of finances, arrange medical appointments and track all aspects of their care, provide input into complicated behavioral support plans and ISP plans and then ensure that the plans are implemented correctly and documented on every shift. We track food intake, make sure that medications are passed on time and correctly and ensure the health and safety of every person in our care. We

learn the strategies that work effectively for each individual and use them. We help the people we support to make healthy choices and live the life they want to live.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of appropriating \$461 million dollars over the next five years to ensure the good work being done throughout the state of Connecticut continues. Community agencies need to be valued for the important work they do and the essential direct care workers who come to work every day and provide compassionate, skilled labor need to be recognized for the excellent work they do. Wages over \$15 an hour are required in order for us to attract and keep the professional and skilled work force required by this field. This funding must be flexible in order for us to not only pay all of our staff what they deserve, but also to continue to improve and expand on the quality services we provide for people with disabilities throughout Connecticut. We will continue doing the hard work, but we need your help to do that.

Thank you.

Carol Breslin

Program Manager

Journey Found, Inc.

60 Hilliard St.

Manchester, CT

cbreslin@journeyfound.org