



State of Connecticut Council on Developmental Services



March 2, 2021

Testimony to The Appropriations Committee Regarding H.B. No. 6439

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Karen Hlavac and I am a member, and the Vice Chairperson of the Council on Developmental Services which is statutorily charged with advising the Governor and Legislature on issues affecting individuals supported by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to testify in support of H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Before we discuss the budget, the Council would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Legislature, Governor, OPM, Commissioner Scheff and the entire leadership team at DDS for working collaboratively to ensure the continuity of services during the pandemic.

The compassion, support and innovation shown over the past year was truly inspiring and a model that was duplicated across the country. To the direct care staff across the state – both from the public and private sector – Thank you! Your tireless efforts do not go unnoticed and have truly defined the meaning of a “hero” during this difficult time for individuals and families. We owe you a great debt of gratitude.

The Council has taken the time to review the Governor’s proposed budget and asks that the Appropriations Committee increase funding to ensure DDS has the resources needed to continue critical services, as we continue to navigate through the pandemic.

The funding will be used by DDS and providers to address current and future issues that individuals and families will face as a result of the pandemic. The Council is particularly concerned with the impacts of isolation, anxiety, loss of employment & skill development opportunities, and staff shortages as all fight to defeat COVID-19. The Council also recognizes the need to provide fair and equitable wages to all direct care workers across the state who have shown time and time again they are ready to serve and protect one of our most vulnerable populations.

Your support will be critically important as the Department and the nonprofit provider community enter the recovery phase of this pandemic.

Thank you for your time and for allowing us this opportunity to address the committee. Working TOGETHER we will continue to keep individuals safe and healthy during these unprecedented times.

Respectfully,

The DDS Council on Developmental Services *Members:*

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