



Appropriations Health Subcommittee Public Hearing on Tuesday March 2, 2021 regarding:

H.B. 6439: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023 and Making Appropriations Therefor

Testimony of Kenneth Cabral, President/CEO for Harc, Inc. and Marian Leist, Vice President of Advocacy & Business Development for Harc, Inc.

March 2, 2021

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

I am Kenneth Cabral, President and CEO of Harc Inc. and I am with Marian Leist, Vice President of Advocacy & Business Development for Harc Inc., a community service provider that supports over 1000 individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families in the Greater Hartford Region.

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. We apologize sincerely that we are unable to testify in person.

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.

We 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:

- *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 increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.*
- *Hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impact of COVID-19.*

The Harc community in particular was significantly impacted by COVID. Several of the people that we support in our group homes passed earlier in the pandemic due to COVID. Many of the people we support and their families experienced isolation from their loved ones, and while we used technology to communicate and connect not being able to see your loved one in person contributed to a sense of loneliness during the pandemic.

As a safety and health prevention measure and at the direction of DDS, Harc closed our Day programs early in the pandemic. The closure motivated us to develop a robust virtual service delivery system that many people at home enjoyed, however as we know a virtual service is not for everyone, and many people need additional support to be a part of this service delivery method. In addition, the number of



people being supported has been considerably reduced due to limited resources and the inability to access the virtual services, lack of the required support to access the service, fear of COVID to return to in person services, the continued closure of businesses, and lack of access to the vaccine for people who live on their own or with their family. This puts the onus of their supports on their families as parent, Christine Skeggs explains in this [video](#) about the complex needs of her son Kevin.

Though some of the people we support who live in congregate care settings, such as our group homes, are in the process of getting vaccinated, those who live at home with families have not been prioritized. A number of families are at or below the poverty line and were financially dependent of the wages earned by their loved one with I/DD, therefore the sustained closure of employment sites has been devastating.

When you consider these factors, which has caused a reduction in revenue, the additional cost of sanitization, personal protective equipment and incentive pay for staff then multiply it by the fact that the nonprofit provider community as a whole has lost \$461 million in state funding since 2007, it makes for an untenable situation.

- *Please reinvest the proposed savings of \$4.1 million by transitioning approximately 300 people to Individual Supported Employment Services from group-supported employment or day services to serve people with I/DD, rather than balancing the budget.*
- *Please reinvest the proposed savings of \$2.3 million from funding reductions in the Behavioral Services Program to serve people with I/DD, rather than balancing the budget.*
- *Please ensure that the proposed savings of \$1 million in each fiscal year from closing one public Community Living Arrangement is reinvested to serve people with I/DD, rather than balancing the budget.*

The people we support need what we all need, and deserve the opportunity to live their best life: one of quality, inclusion and dignity, like Jane in this [video](#). In order to help achieve this, we also must be able to pay our staff a livable wage, one that compensates the level of experience, training and professionalism required of them.

The value and need for our services is best described by a few of the parents of those we support in our [Have a Harc Day of Advocacy Video](#). Toni Alphonse, former state employee and Harc parent stated that our services are essential for her family as she expresses in this video. We respectfully ask you to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and by committing to fully funding the provider community.

Respectfully,

Kenneth Cabral, M.Ed.
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Harc, Inc.

Marian Leist
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