

March 2, 2021

Testimony To The Appropriations Committee

To Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am Mary-Ellen Callahan, a Connecticut resident and the Development Director for MARC, Inc. of Manchester, a service provider funded by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Thank you for the opportunity to encourage your support of H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

Until I worked for MARC, Inc. of Manchester I did not know all that goes into providing human services. Direct Support Professionals are an exceptional group of humans. They serve individuals who are not relatives, who have unique needs, who have personalities and free will but who cannot do everything themselves. DSPs literally hold their lives in the balance, every day. They have to know nutrition requirements of all those they serve. They administer medications. They socialize. They bathe and clothe. They celebrate holidays. They raise spirits. Never more than right now and all this past year with this pandemic. They deserve to be paid in accordance with and in recognition for all that they provide.

This is not a basic minimum wage job. This is a calling. A vocation. It requires skill and training. Constant testing to renew certifications.

I request an equitable increase of funding to DDS to ensure continuity of services and also provide fair and equitable wages to staff who provide valuable services. As the minimum wage goes up, so should the wages of specialized staff who are trained to administer medication, nutrition, and direct care to our neighbors who have developmental disabilities.

Respectively Submitted,

Mary-Ellen Callahan