

## Testimony to Appropriations Committee

### HB 6439: An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023 and Making Appropriations Therefor

#### REVISED

March 2, 2021

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representatives Dathan and Nolan, Senator Miner and Representative France and other esteemed committee members, my name is Win Evarts. I live in Norwalk with my family and I'm the Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, this state's oldest and largest advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and promoting their inclusion in the full lives of their communities.

I'm here today to speak on HB 6439, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023 and Making Appropriations Therefor. My comments are on the areas of the budget that affect individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities which is largely the Department of Developmental Services but also includes the Departments of Social Services, and Aging and Disability Services. I would like to thank each of these agencies for their efforts to support people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The DDS budget features additional funding in the coming biennium to provide supports to individuals graduating from local educational authorities, those moving back to Connecticut from educational outplacements, and leaving the support of the Department of Children and Families. This is funding for which families are grateful.

The DDS budget also includes targeted savings related to appropriately transitioning individuals with I/DD from social and/or group employment programs to individual supported employment programs. These savings will have a higher certainty of attainment if other currently proposed legislation is passed, examples include employer incentives, a workforce development pipeline, and mandatory best-efforts participation in hiring people with disabilities by businesses that receive economic support from the state.

The major item that Governor Lamont's budget does not address is the impact that COVID-19 and an increasing state minimum wage will have on the essential workers that support individuals with I/DD in the community, at work, and in their homes. The work is hard. It's harder than many other jobs at similar wages. The current pay of a minimum of \$14.75/hour frequently necessitates working multiple shifts, possibly for multiple employers, in a day. As the minimum wage increases to \$13.00, then \$14.00, then \$15.00/hour, those who are now essential will leave the human services field and the relationships that depend on them, to pursue careers in other fields where the work is easier. This scenario further unfolds to an individual then possibly being supported by someone inexperienced or inappropriate, or a parent who leaves their job, or results in a qualified provider determining that it can't operate without appropriate staff.

This scenario can be avoided by doing a few things: 1) lift the rates of human services providers to reflect the true costs of providing the supports embedded in an individual's plan

by injecting \$461 million over 5 years into nonprofits; 2) index those rates to a premium to the state minimum wage; 3) implement annual contingency payments for defined, achieved outcomes (like the previously discussed individual supported employment transition); and 4) do away with cost settlement and negotiate “retained revenue” every two years with qualified providers. Implementing practices like these that are aimed at basing the payment system on the needs and plan of the individual with I/DD, paying human services employees a fair wage worthy of their work, and incentivizing desired outcomes and innovation by qualified providers will enable individuals with I/DD and those that support them to thrive.

Thank you for your efforts to improve the lives of all the people that live in Connecticut.

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