



Appropriations Committee Public Hearing - March 2, 2021
H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 30, 2023

The true measure of any society can
be found in how it treats its most
vulnerable members

— Mahatma Gandhi —

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Governor's budget proposal.

I am Alyssa Goduti, the President and CEO of Adelbrook Behavioral and Developmental Services. Adelbrook is a multi-service agency specializing in Autism Spectrum Disorders, developmental services, and behavioral health treatment. We contract with the Department of Children and Families, Department of Developmental Services, municipalities and school systems, and receive Medicaid funding for our residential programs through the Department of Social Services. We support approximately 350 youth with highly complex developmental and behavioral needs and their families with the expertise of more than 600 talented and caring employees and in 20 locations throughout Central CT. We provide an array of educational, residential, and community-based services, including residential treatment, therapeutic group homes, community living arrangements, and continuous residential support homes. We have programs in Cromwell, Middletown, East Hartford, Manchester, Portland, Berlin, Bristol, Cheshire, New Britain, Southington and Meriden. Our students and residents come to us from nearly every community in Connecticut and from other states.

We provide highly specialized services including evaluation and assessment; stabilization, treatment and transition services, and have a specialty in serving those with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Many of the children and young adults we serve have extensive trauma histories, experienced multiple hospitalizations and have been in other treatment programs, often out-of-state. Our programs keep people out of hospitals and help get them back into the community. We work to understand and address behaviors, help individuals develop and improve communication skills, identify and maximize their unique talents, and ultimately help them find hope and happiness.

Our success is dependent on our talented, committed and compassionate staff. They work to build relationships, establish trust and provide the most individualized care in every aspect of our children's lives. We do this work not only to fulfill our mission of helping people in need find hope and healing but also in partnership with and on behalf of the state of CT. Our work in caring for people in need is rightfully a core function and obligation of government.

The value of our nonprofit human services staff has never been more apparent than in the past 11 months. When most people were able to remain home for months during the height of the pandemic, our staff continued to support the people in need who live in our group homes. They showed up, shift after shift, putting others ahead of themselves. They quarantined with our individuals in times of exposure of COVID positive cases. They are among the heroes of the pandemic and they are always essential and always heroic. It is only right that state government recognizes the value of their service by infusing funds into the system to address years of inadequate funding.

We are now at 14 years of essentially no cost of living increase from our state funders. Since 2007, community nonprofits have lost at least \$461M in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation. As a business and a large employer, it is unreasonable to expect us to continue to provide the same level of service, meet complex and increasing regulatory requirements, and address growing demands for services at reimbursement rates that don't come close to meeting our costs. Costs for staffing, health insurance, utilities, rent and other business expenses have increased steadily but our state reimbursement levels have remained flat.

I ask that you commit to increasing funding by \$461M by fiscal 2026. For 2022 we request a \$128M appropriation (a state net of \$67M after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits, a 7% increase. I ask that you plan for consistent funding increases that are indexed to inflation so that we may continue to meet growing needs and respect our incredible staff with wages that reflect the challenging work they do and allow us to retain and recruit a high quality workforce. This is the time to support vital human services for our most vulnerable children, adults and families with the most significant needs.

Lessons learned through the pandemic, coupled with projected surpluses and looming state retirements, make this session the time for state government to invest in the community-based nonprofit human services system so that we continue to be part of the solution for children, families, individuals, and government. Our 600 employees and their peers across the state deserve to be paid at levels that reflect their expertise and dedication and to have a system that provides consistent funding increases to meet the cost of inflation. The children and young adults we serve deserve to have consistent staffing, with limited impact of turnover. The state needs a stable system to turn to when thousands of state employees access retirement and human services will have to be shifted to the nonprofit system.

Please remember that we are part of the budget solution. Now is the time to invest in the nonprofit human service infrastructure.

Thank you for your time and attention.