

*Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:*

Submitted By: Trudy, Director of Individualized Support Services, MARC Community Resources

March 1, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the appropriations committee.

My name is Trudy Haury, and I am the Director of Individualized Support Services at MARC Community Resources in Middletown. I have been a professional in the human service industry for over 30 years.

This testimony is in regards to H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning the State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023.

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.

I can honestly say I love my job and cherish the relationships I've made with other professionals, families, advocates and most importantly the individuals we serve. Provider agencies, individuals receiving services and their families saw a wage increase in 2019. Sadly, before that there were nothing but cuts for over a decade.

I am here to 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:

1. Commit to increase funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by fiscal year 2026;
2. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net total of 67 million after federal reimbursement) in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2022, a 7% increase.
3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.
4. Hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impact of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the impact of inadequate funding for nonprofit services and brought unanticipated and unbudgeted costs and operational challenges for many community nonprofits, such as:

- Providing hazard pay for essential workers on the front lines with higher risk of exposure;
- Procuring expensive and hard to find Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies;
- Creating telehealth services seemingly overnight, and purchasing necessary computers, cybersecurity, online meeting platforms and training for both staff and individuals receiving services.
- Many community nonprofits never closed their doors, even as the pandemic worsened.

Clearly individuals receiving services are of the utmost importance; however, I'd like to briefly speak on behalf of the wonderful people providing services. I began my career in human services at MARC over 30 years ago as a direct care staff. Through hard work and persistence I was able to move up each rung of the ladder to take my current position in 2018 . Unfortunately, owing to ongoing budget constraints, staff went more than 9 years without a single raise. I had to watch many of my friends and colleagues leave MARC for other jobs in other

industries. Many direct support specialists have had to leave MARC , primarily because they could no longer pay bills absent 20 hours weekly of overtime. 60 hour work weeks breed burn out and failure to focus. These staff members provide quality care, yet they are the working poor.

It's difficult to explain the bond human service personnel develop with the people they are supporting. I know what it's like to have a conversation with someone who has been labeled non-verbal or low-functioning. When you apply for this job, you're told you'll be working to teach various skills. But what they don't say is that while you're teaching someone, they'll also be teaching you. They don't tell you it will be the most amazing job you've ever had. On other days, it can be the worst. It's tough to describe on paper the emotional toll it takes. These brilliant individuals have taught me to slow down, to think, to take the time to just look around and take in all the beauty; the simple joys we are blessed to encounter every day. Unfortunately not all direct support specialists can afford to remain working in a field that does not cover expenses. The individuals learn that staff they depend on and care for leave too often because of this.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, or for additional information.

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