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***Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:  
HB. No. 6439 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium  
Ending June 30, 2023  
Submitted for March 2, 2021***

Good afternoon Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker, Sen. Miner, Rep. France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Patrick Johnson and I am testifying today as a retired CEO of nonprofit human service agencies in CT, as a consultant and current Board member of CT based nonprofit organizations, and, with my wife Margie, as legal guardian for her two disabled brothers. For the past 20 years, of my 50 year career, I have been witness to and had to deal with the chronic underfunding of essential human services in this state. It has been and remains painful and profoundly disturbing.

Madame Chairs, I am grateful for your public support of our non profit agencies. I know you are familiar with the fact that there has not been a net increase in our state contract rates in 14 years. The testimony of Gian-Carl Casa of The Alliance, Barry Simon of Oak Hill, and Margaret Hann of the Bridge Family Center in West Hartford will give you the picture of the impact on the non profit organizations they represent.

I want to share with you what I and my wife have witnessed as legal guardians for her brothers. Margie's brother Joe lives in assisted living at Mercy Community Health in West Hartford. He is 70 years old and is totally blind and has other serious developmental limitations. Her brother Francis is 71 years old and is also totally blind, non-verbal, autistic and profoundly developmentally disabled. He requires 24 hours per day line of sight supervision and assistance with all daily living skills. Joe lived with his mother prior to moving to assisted living. She died several years ago at 88. Francis lived at Southbury Training School for over 43 years before transferring to an Oak Hill group home in Mansfield. Margie and I are in our 70's and older than her brothers. We have grave concerns about their future and the future of the thousands of people with disabilities like them. Of major concern is what happens to them if we die first.

We worry because the Governor seems to think that they should be cared for by charity, like they did in the 18th and 19th century. The inadequacy of the funding over the past 14 years seems to support that idea. Tragically charity is inadequate to do the job and can not supplant the responsibility of the whole community. We have witnessed nonprofits going out of business, programs being closed or reduced, underfunded staff being subjected to wage and benefit cuts, food budgets being cut, as well as buildings being neglected. It is painful to see underfunded staff being driven deeper into poverty. Dedicated professional staff who have the responsibility for the lives of people with disabilities are being paid less than fast food workers. Staff turnover has increased, thus driving down the quality of care and increasing safety concerns. COVID 19 has turned a crises into a catastrophe as nonprofits struggle to cover unanticipated costs to improve the safety of program participants and their staff during this pandemic. Most of the staff are women and people of color who are working multiple jobs while caring for their own families. This is a civil rights issue that is being addressed in other venues but not in the non profit world due to inadequate resources. Like our program participants, non profits seem to remain invisible despite the thousands of people with disabilities who depend on them daily, as do Margie and I and her brothers. Please commit to increasing funding by the total \$461 million by FY 2026.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Patrick & Marjorie Johnson