

Good afternoon distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Maria Maggio and I live in Norwalk, CT and work for STAR, Inc., in Norwalk, CT.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June, 2023.

Community nonprofits like STAR 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 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.

I have been working for STAR for almost 3 years now and love the that work I do. In my role of Benefits Coordinator, I help to safeguard the benefits and assets for people who are the most vulnerable. I work closely with our direct care staff and have witnessed firsthand their loyalty and dedication to the people they serve. During this pandemic, many of these men and women showed their continued commitment by putting themselves and their families at risk in order to take care of their “work family”. This allowed our residents to maintain their day-to-day quality of life and wellbeing. In order to continue to do this important work, all employees need a living wage to be able to support and raise our own families. The starting wage for direct support staff is \$14.75. The work a direct support staff does holds a great deal of responsibility for keeping very vulnerable people safe and this has only increased as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Please increase funding to the non-profit agencies so that this important work can continue.

Thank you.