

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Diane Millan. I have worked at Marrakech for 30 years, a private nonprofit agency that supports over a thousand people with disabilities and similar service needs, with over 700 employees, throughout Connecticut.

When I turned 60 in January, I realized I have worked at Marrakech for half of my life. I began my career as an essential front line employee. My daughter grew up learning about Marrakech's role in peoples' lives. In fact, during her college years, she worked at Marrakech with youth with challenges which helped her in her college studies of music and teaching.

My current role is Vice President of Risk Management. I help with employee issues, am a trainer, am a mentor, help manage unemployment claims, investigate abuse and neglect, oversee workers compensation claims to name a few things.

Our employees have worked safely throughout the pandemic and could not stop because they support people 24/7. Marrakech handled the onset of Covid best, protecting the health and safety of employees and people we serve by being creative to set up live in positions and task forces to ensure that there were as few human to human exposures as possible. We kept everyone employed with no layoffs through the task forces we set up at our programs. PPE deliveries, food deliveries laundry service, activity supplies to keep individuals engaged, all completed and dropped off at the door to avoid unnecessary contact outside of the home.

We are deemed critically essential employees. Yet, Marrakech and other human service private nonprofits have not received a Cost of Living Increase (COLA) since 2007. There was nothing paid to nonprofits to pay for our medical benefit increases, our retirement savings, our program upgrades, etc. for 14 years. Remember I mentioned that I am 60? I hope to retire by 68. But that doesn't seem possible!

Why do I stay? I work at Marrakech because I care about the people here, my coworkers and the people we support. I have worked here without any promise of COLAs or increases. Most of us working at Marrakech (70%) identify as black or brown which is similar to other nonprofits in the state. The people we support, their caregivers and our hard work on behalf of the most vulnerable people appear not to be valued in Connecticut. We provide high quality services for a fraction of the cost of State run services. This inequity should end.

It is hard enough to recruit employees to work in our programs due to pay rates, cost and benefit coverage, responsibilities, the pandemic, etc. Without fixing the years with no increases, I don't know how we will keep going in the future. We have seen our critically essential staff take jobs at higher salaries in non-critical roles.

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 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 increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2026;
2. Appropriate \$128 million (a state net 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.

Please commit to increasing funding for community nonprofits by \$461 million over five years. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time.

Diane Millan

Vice President of Risk Management

Marrakech Inc.