

Appropriations Committee Testimony

Public Hearing on:

[H.B. 6439](#) An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor.

Health Subcommittee

Tuesday, March 2, 10:00 am

Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Pamela Paisey and I am the CEO of Community Residences Inc. (CRI), a nonprofit provider of day, residence, and family supports to more than 700 children and adults with special needs across many Connecticut communities. CRI employs approximately 1000 staff. I am offering testimony on H.B. 6439 as a member of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits on behalf of our employees.

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. I respectfully request the legislature:

- Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million over the next five years;
- Appropriate \$128 million in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 2022;
- Index future increases to inflation.
- Hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impact of COVID-19.

This pandemic brought unbudgeted costs and challenges for CRI, such as:

- Providing hazard pay and paid sick leave for essential front-line workers;
- Procuring expensive and scarce PPE;
- Adapting to unprecedented workforce and consumer challenges;
- Continuing to staff people's residences even as the pandemic worsened and staff became ill.

Demands for service quality continue to increase while flat funding does not allow for growth.

- We have gone 12 years with no COLA while the cost of living has risen significantly.
- Raising direct care staff to \$14.75 two years ago was welcome but did not address other costs.
- Private sector staff do not have parity with public sector staff doing exactly the same job.
- National movement toward a minimum wage of \$15.00 puts the salaries of Direct Support Professionals back to minimum wage.
- Many of our staff work two jobs just to survive.
- Currently, places such as Costco, Amazon, Target are paying more than \$15.00/hr. This makes it difficult for us to attract and retain qualified, dedicated staff.
- Flat funding does not allow for retention. Survey of our staff shows low pay is a leading cause of high turnover – that can reach 50% annually in the field as a whole.
- Our staff worked through this pandemic, risking their lives to take care of the most vulnerable individuals. They are essential. Essential staff need to be recognized and compensated for risking their own safety to ensure the safety of others. If we want them to be here in the future, we need to ensure they have a livable wage now.

Thank you