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**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**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 6439.

My name is Susan Pearson. I am the Executive Director of Network, Inc. Network, Inc. is a non-profit who serves 258 constituents and employs a staff of 390 within the Intellectual and Developmental Disabled (IDD) Community throughout the northeastern and central parts of Connecticut.

Previous budget cuts and chronic underfunding year after year have negatively impacted our organization, the people we serve, and the staff we employ, which affects the communities as a whole. The consistent lack of funding equates to a wage that is barely above poverty level. The chronic underfunding does not allow us to offer many full time benefitted positions or any cost of living increases. The majority of our direct care workers who only have a single income stream have to work an excessive amount of hours and/or multiple jobs to meet the growing financial needs necessary to support their families. Working in this field requires strength and commitment to take care of some of the most challenging and vulnerable folks of our state. Our staff are responsible for all aspects of direct care including med administration, PT, OT, dietary, housekeeping, transport and appointment management, etc.. It has been difficult to hire when the high level of responsibility does not match the low rate of pay we can offer. Network, Inc. currently has 70 open part time positions that equates to over 3000 hours bi-weekly that we are unable to fill. This hardship has left us no choice but to staff over two-thirds of our open hours at the overtime rate, incurring a significant amount of additional revenue spent every pay period. The amount of overtime continues to rise each and every month due to not being able to adequately hire new employees.

Our employees have pulled through this pandemic working around the clock to ensure the safety of those served. The astounding amount of overtime employees are working to get the needed hours covered has led to diminishing level of care to the folks we serve.

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. Demand continues to increase as funding is cut.