



**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF Mark Perkins  
TO THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON  
H.B. 6439 AAC AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING  
JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR  
MARCH 2, 2021**

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

My name is Mark Perkins, COO of Journey Found. Journey Found is a nonprofit organization supporting adults with intellectual disabilities throughout North Central and Southeastern Connecticut. Our primary services are residential in nature and we operate thirty (30) locations. Our residential services support people in small groups of 2-4 people and our services are based on teaching and supporting people with disabilities in every aspect of their lives.

Community nonprofits provide essential services throughout the state. Collectively, we employ tens of thousands of people who provide critical services to Connecticut's most vulnerable residents. The quality of life that Journey Found and other nonprofit organizations provide is key to enriching our communities. Journey Found has struggled to maintain a high level of quality direct support professionals due to a lack of contractual increases that reflect the true cost of our services. Based on inflation alone, this represents a loss of \$461 million since 2007 and has added additional financial stress to an already strained system.

I am respectfully requesting that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits. Please:

- Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2026.
- 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.
- Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.
- Hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impact of COVID-19.

Covid-19 has increased the financial strain for Journey Found with many non-budgeted costs that include:

- Incentive pay for direct support professionals.
- Medical grade personal protective equipment (PPE) and expenses for N-95 fit testing and medical clearance

- Additional staffing support for people who could not attend work or their community day program. To date this is still an issue as people have not been able to return to work until vaccinated

The state contracts in Connecticut for nonprofits have not seen inflationary increases in well over a decade. Chronic underfunding and budget cuts for essential services is making it almost impossible for nonprofits to fulfill their missions. Some examples of this include:

- Insufficient funding necessary to maintain the necessary upkeep with regards to maintenance for the 11 homes that we own in the state.
- Ability to maintain a differential between the increasing minimum wage and our starting salary for direct support which is currently \$14.75 per hour. The expertise needed to provide care to our population is as complex as the people that we support. This is in no way a minimum wage job classification.

I also have a few additional requests:

- Please reinvest the proposed savings of \$4.1 million by transitioning approximately 300 people to Individual Supported Employment Services from group-supported employment or day services to serve people with I/DD, rather than balancing the budget.
- Please reinvest the proposed savings of \$2.3 million from funding reductions in the Behavioral Services Program to serve people with I/DD, rather than balancing the budget.
- Please ensure that the proposed savings of \$1 million in each fiscal year from closing one public Community Living Arrangement is reinvested to serve people with I/DD, rather than balancing the budget.

H.B. 6439 provides necessary funding to maintain high quality services for the population that Journey Found serves. Please support H.B. 6439 and help us direct resources where they are needed and most effective.

Thank you,

Mark Perkins  
COO, Journey Found  
60 Hilliard Street  
Manchester, CT 06042  
[mperkins@journeyfound.org](mailto:mperkins@journeyfound.org)  
860-643-9844 x 120