

Celeste Ragin
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March 1, 2021

RE: H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budge for the Biennial Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor.

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Celeste Ragin and I work for the nonprofit agency, STAR, Inc. Leading the Way in Norwalk, Connecticut. I have been an employee at STAR for over 9 years in different positions such as Residential Instructor, Senior Community Support Specialist, Job Coach and Program Coordinator. I have witnessed the scope of services that is offered through our company such as day program, residential services, employment, training, recreational and health services. STAR is a vital organization in Norwalk as it offers services to not only in Norwalk thebut to Darien, Wilton, New Canaan, Westport areas. I am writing to ask that this committee oppose reduction in Employment Opportunities or reinvest any necessary savings into the service system rather than using it to balance the budget. Also to please restore full funding to independent living centers that helps people of all ages, all type of disabilities, live independently in the community.

Even as the pandemic worsened STAR never closed its doors as our service is essential to the health, safety and wellbeing of our participants. I respectfully request that the legislature appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits so that we may continue this invaluable service to our clients.

Celeste Ragin, Program Coordinator