



Appropriations Committee Talking Points

Public Hearing on:

**H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023,
And Making Appropriations Therefor.**

Elementary and Secondary Education 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 George Reid-Perry representing SARA Inc. Our organization provides services to adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities supporting them on their path to securing employment and community-based day programming.

We support between 250-300 adults per year with differing abilities in New Haven, Middlesex, and New London counties and employ approximately 130 employees.

As you know, and the Governor has recently acknowledged, Community non-profits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving people in need and employing tens of thousands. This past year has shown the resiliency and dedication of the Non-profit community and all those we employ and provide services to. With that being said, we cannot continue to provide these critical services on well wishes and stagnant funding.

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.

From March 2019 to current during the COVID-19 pandemic our agency has incurred unanticipated and unbudgeted costs and operational challenges such as:

- Procuring expensive and hard to find Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies; \$40K
- Creating virtual services seemingly overnight, and purchasing necessary computers, cybersecurity, online meeting platforms and training for both staff and people receiving services, this has cost our agency over \$25K

- We needed to create, Implement/Update, and track new policies and procedures to ensure health and safety measures for all staff and individuals meet CDC and DPH guidelines on a daily basis.
- Most importantly during COVID we did not layoff or terminate any staff as a result of the pandemic, which we are very proud to share.

As I have noted, PREVIOUS BUDGET CUTS & CHRONIC UNDERFUNDING have put our agencies in a constant staffing crunch as we are competing with Big Box stores who compensate employees at higher starting wages than we can afford due to lack of appropriate funding.

The requirements and demands of supporting those with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities can be very rigorous. Without additional funding we will continue to see a decline in the ability to hire a dedicated and highly skilled workforce that this field requires.

I want to thank you for your time as you consider appropriating \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits.

George Reid-Perry, M.P.A.
Senior Director Adult Services
SARAH Inc.