

Appropriations Committee

Public Hearing on:

[H.B. 6439](#)

An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023, And Making Appropriations Therefor.

Good afternoon, my name is Sandy Rice and I am here to speak to HB 6439. For 15 years, the staff of Horizons, those dedicated and committed team members who serve people with developmental disabilities have not had an increase. Please let that sink in for a moment. Imagine a spouse, partner or adult child of yours sits across the dinner table to tell you *once again*, as it has been since 2007, funding levels have not increased. Imagine their heartbreak as they contemplate leaving the people they serve, leaving the career they have chosen, forfeiting their education and training because they simply can no longer can pay their bills.

Serving people with developmental disabilities for forty years Horizons has developed processes and creative techniques to provide for the essential needs of this often-overlooked segment of the CT population. In this forty-year period, Horizons has been recognized on the state and national level for our exceptional practices and the ability to develop and scale our practices to serve more of this deserving community. The benefits to those we serve, their families, the communities and to the State of Connecticut are immeasurable.

As Treasurer for Horizons since 2009, I have the unique vantage point to monitor and respond to the dire circumstances we face. The impact of the absence of an increase leaves us hamstrung to provide a living wage to those on the front line who day in and day out, minute by minute, serve our people's ever-changing needs.

The core of any firm is the ongoing retention of their employees. Our team members are extremely dedicated to their charges and each day increase their skills, techniques, approach and experience. At the end of the day they return home to a reality where their rent, food, insurance and other simple household budget items continue to rise. The economic reality they face and live with becomes overwhelming, sometimes forcing them to leave the people and career they love.

The leadership team at Horizons has worked diligently to manage and reduce our overhead and administrative costs successfully getting it to just 12% of our overall operating costs.

Horizons has long viewed our staff as essential workers. Their responsibilities and efforts have only increased during the Covid pandemic.

Now at the intersection of a reasonable budget, matching Federal assistance and the beginning of an economic recovery, Connecticut is uniquely positioned to finally provide necessary and tangible relief.

Please enthusiastically vote to appropriate \$461 Million over the next 5 years and demonstrate Connecticut's commitment to these essential employees

Thank you,

Sandy Rice, Treasurer, Horizons

