

March 2, 2021
Appropriations Committee

Public Hearing on:

**H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2023,
and Making Appropriations Therefore.**

Heath Subcommittee

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

My name is Anne Ruwet, I serve as the CEO of CCARC, Inc. and we provide Residential and Day Support Services to people with intellectual disabilities in the greater New Britain community.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on H.B. 6439 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023, and Making Appropriations Therefor.

As many of you know Community Nonprofits provide essential services every day in cities and towns throughout Connecticut, sometimes not recognized until you or family member need us. What many may not know we employ thousands of people and operate our agencies with volunteer Board members that reside in the respective cities who have a fiduciary oversight of our annual budgets. We also do business with local companies for banking, purchasing our insurance and other daily activities in our communities.

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. Please:

1. Commit to increasing funding by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2026;
2. 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;
3. Index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future.
4. Hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impact of COVID-19.

This past year we have all had to adjust and live a new normal. At CCARC, Inc. we have continued thru the pandemic to provide essential residential services 24/7. Our employees have been our heroes coming to work leaving their families, to care for the people with intellectual disabilities that couldn't survive without them. Staff had to adjust and wear PPE equipment to ensure the safety of the residents and their peers. Extraordinary measures were taken with fogging the homes and increased cleaning of the homes. This all came with additional costs that have not been fully reimbursed.

The COVID-19 pandemic only highlighted the inadequate funding for our services. Such as:

- Procuring expensive and hard to find Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies;

- Providing premium pay to incentivize our staff to work in homes that were under quarantined restrictions due to active COVID cases.
- Purchasing necessary computers, cybersecurity, online meeting platforms and training for both staff and people receiving services in order to stay connected.

We have been fortunate at CCARC to have a strong community that have given generously to help defray the costs of our overburdened budgets and years of underfunding in our state contracts but unfortunately it can never touch what is really needed to cover the actual costs of providing these services nor should it. We provide essential services that if we were not here the people we support would be shut away in extremely costly institutions. We can't go backyards – it is time to fully fund our services and recognize the importance of our services in your communities.

Thank you for this opportunity and I am pleading with you to fully fund the community nonprofits for the critical and essential services we provide every day.