



**Public Hearing on:**

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

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

My name is Steven Schwartz, I live in Woodbridge, and I have been serving as a volunteer on the Board of Directors of Marrakech, Inc. for the past 17 years.

Marrakech is an agency with 715 employees who are dedicated to providing the best possible care to the individuals with disabilities we serve. I am proud to be associated with such a caring group of people.

DDS, which provides much of our funding, also recognizes the quality of service Marrakech provides. Last week, we had our quality meeting with DDS and we received glowing reports from all three regions we operate in.

I'm proud to say that we remained open during COVID, although we did not qualify for PPP money because of our size. 56% of our employees changed their job duties, work shifts, work sites and some actually packed their bags, left their families and moved into our congregate living sites so that we were able to successfully reduce the amount of human-to-human contact and successfully stopped the spread of COVID in these sites within 13 days of our first positive case, for both the people we support and our staff.

Despite the high quality service we provide, it has been 14 years since the State has provided a cost of living increase. Every year, our staff faced an increased cost of living without an increase in their income to compensate. Every year, Marrakech has to pay vendors more money for health insurance, snow plowing, and other services. This negatively impacts our staff, our consumers, and their families.

The Governor's proposed budget does not grant an increase for the human service nonprofits, yet the budget contains 200 part time positions to be hired by DDS at approximately \$23.00 per hour. These proposals alone put us in an extremely undesirable and unsustainable position.

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.

Thank you.