

I am Linda Walsh, a Clinical Director at Gilead Community Services, Inc. and am writing today in support of increasing funding to private non-profit community providers by the full \$461 million, or 28%, by Fiscal Year 2026; 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; index increases to inflation, to ensure that state funding will keep pace with increased costs in the future, and lastly, hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impact of COVID-19.

I started my professional career working at a non-profit mental health agency in the early 1980s. At that time community based programming was a new idea and we had no blueprint to follow. We listened to what people needed in order to stay living in the community and avoid institutionalization. We provided basic needs to clients and eventually added services that did more than just keep people out of institutions- they allowed individuals living with serious mental illness to have a meaningful role in the community.

Over the decades, I have seen community based services grow into integrated, empirically based supports that work within a larger network of services. Individuals who would not have been able to live outside of an institution years ago are now living in the community, some in residential care and most in their own homes. This has happened due to the dedication of agencies such as Gilead who continue to challenge themselves to provide recovery oriented care to individuals with serious mental illness, many of whom who struggle daily with symptoms. The courage and strength of our clients has always been an inspiration to me.

I am also inspired by the commitment of our staff who have continued to work through this pandemic even as they were also adjusting to unknown and unpredictable events. Many staff, however had to quarantine themselves or had to leave work due to their own health conditions. I saw the impact this had on our clients as the supports they rely on were diminished and isolation set in. Many of us struggled with isolation this past year but those who have limited support of family and friends and who rely on professional support were hit especially hard. One person I have known for years told me she felt we had let her down in the early months of the pandemic because staff were not there as much as they had been. She seemed truly hurt especially because she got Covid-19 and was hospitalized for weeks, close to death at one point. That was a true statement and hard to hear but reinforced the value of the relationships we have with our clients and the need for the services we provide.

In every year, community based non-profits provide services that ultimately save the state money as they keep individuals out of much higher cost hospitals and emergency rooms. If we focus on finances alone, there is a compelling argument to increase support for non-profits so they can pay staff what they deserve and continue to grow, thrive and contribute to communities across the state.

Please commit to fund the full \$461 million (28% increase) by Fiscal Year 2026!

Please appropriate \$128 million in new funding for community nonprofits in Fiscal Year 22 (7% increase)!

Please index future increases to inflation to ensure that future funding keeps pace with increase costs!

And, finally, please hold nonprofits financially harmless from the impacts of COVID-19!

Thank you for reading this message.

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