

Public Hearing Testimony
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 members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Michelle Weinstein and I work at Ability Beyond, a nonprofit which serves individuals with various disabilities. I have worked here for the past 16 years and have come to see firsthand how invaluable the services we provide are to the individuals we serve, their families and the community at large. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill concerning this upcoming year's state budget

Community nonprofits provide essential services in every part of this state, serving people in need and employing tens of thousands. They are what make Connecticut a great place to live and work.

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.

Every year we fight for funding and for services needed, but this past year was truly unrepresented. The COVID-19 PANDEMIC has placed a complete unforeseen burden on community nonprofits in a way that none of us could have ever imagined. Thankfully, the strength and perseverance of each and every staff member was a huge help in allowing us to be a successful and responsive as we were and continue to be. We took care of, provided care for our individuals- helping them process what was happening to our world, to our communities, all the while having to do it for ourselves.

Financially, COVID has hit everyone in various ways; while ours was not unique some of the financial challenges we faced were providing increased pay for essential workers on the front lines with a higher risk of exposure; including our Leir Recovery Hub that we created, a safe and identified area that we dedicated to treating and caring for suspected and confirmed individuals diagnosed with COVID. We procured expensive Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies, created telehealth services and provided technology and equipment to ensure we were able to have our individuals reach providers.

Mental health services has been a priority more than ever this past year and its anticipated to only increase in our future. During a time when people are the most vulnerable they may have ever been, during a time when nothing seems certain, predictable or familiar, this time, more than ever calls for us to rise up, advocate for and ensure fiscal restoration.

Thank you for your time,

Michelle Weinstein, LADC, AADC
Ability Beyond