



**Testimony by Steven Wolfe, Executive Director, KenCrest
March 2, 2020 – Appropriations Committee
Health Subcommittee – Department of Developmental Services (DDS)**

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 Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. My name is Steven Wolfe and I'm the Connecticut Executive Director for KenCrest, an agency that provides supports and services to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD).

KenCrest operates 13 community living homes in Fairfield and New Haven Counties. Our workforce, Direct Support Professionals or DSPs, provide essential supports and services so that people with disabilities can live an independent and every-day life in the community of their choice.

COVID-19 has severely impacted the I/DD community. Individuals with intellectual disabilities are significantly more likely to become severely ill or die from the disease, and our DSP workforce, as essential workers, are at a higher risk of contracting the virus. Throughout the pandemic, DSPs have gone above and beyond and served faithfully despite the numerous risks and challenges. In face of all of this, DSPs are paid relatively low wages, which causes high-turnover in the field. The I/DD system has one payer – Medicaid – supported by both state and federal dollars.

Therefore, we respectfully request the General Assembly appropriate \$461 million over five years for community nonprofits. Over the past 13 years, community nonprofits have lost at least this amount in state funding that has not kept pace with inflation or adequately covered increased cost and demand for services. This funding is critical to continue providing high-quality supports and services and to stabilize the community services system. We are also urging the state legislature to reinvest in the I/DD system, by using proposed savings from program transitions to serve people with I/DD, rather than balancing the budget.

KenCrest stands ready to work with state legislators, DDS, families, and the provider community to solve these issues, so that we can all continue to provide essential community supports and services to people with disabilities in Connecticut.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.