

Date: March 1, 2021
To: Appropriations Committee, Health Subcommittee
From: Paul Zakarian, 1 Miles Ave Middletown CT 06457

Re: HB 6439 An Act Adjusting The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 13, 2023

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Paul Zakarian and I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony on H.B. 6439, An Act Adjusting the State Budget For The Biennium Ending June 13, 2023

I am on the Board of Directors for Gilead Community Services in Middletown. Gilead has provided a full continuum of Mental Health & Addiction services in Middlesex County for over 50 years. Each year 300 staff members provide valuable services that support and benefit thousands of our community members. Services that help uplift and support these citizens who are our friends, neighbors and family members. Services that are not available from any other existing community resources.

Today, I am writing on their behalf to encourage you to support the plan outlined by the CT Nonprofit Alliance to appropriate \$461 million over the next five years to protect and fully fund the essential services that organizations like Gilead provide to the community.

Agencies such as Gilead are honored to serve those who come to us looking for treatment and services. Gilead has dedicated and trained professional staff ready who are all eager to help and have risen to the challenges brought on by the pandemic. They are part of the network of non-profit providers that hundreds of thousands of state residents have depended on for essential services during the pandemic. We now are asking you to help protect staff and clients from the potential for decreased programming, decreased staffing levels, and reduced client capacity while the need for these essential services is on the rise.

The non-profit community has the ability to provide front line services that can ultimately reduce the cost and impact of mental health and addiction disorders by treating them in the community, at the outpatient level, before more expensive acute care options are required.

In summary, I am joining others in asking for your commitment for the following:

- Fully fund the five year \$461 million increase, detailed by the CT Nonprofit Alliance
- Appropriate \$128 million in new funding for community nonprofits in FY22
- Index future increases to inflation to ensure that funding keeps pace with increased costs
- Hold nonprofits harmless from the impact of COVID-19.

Respectfully submitted,



Paul Zakarian, Board Member - Gilead Community Services