



MARC, INC. OF MANCHESTER  
151 SHELDON ROAD  
MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT  
06042

860-646-5718  
FAX 860-645-9910

KEVIN ZINGLER  
PRESIDENT & CEO

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Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Kevin Zingler and I am the President & CEO of MARC, Inc. of Manchester, a nonprofit organization that provides Day, Residential, Respite, Personal Supports, Supported Employment and Transportation Services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to testify in support of H.B. No. 6439 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH, 2023, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.

As a partner with the Development of Developmental Services (DDS) for the past 69 years, I am here to respectfully request that the legislature appropriate additional funds to the DDS budget to increase pay rates for Direct Support Professionals and address the ongoing needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities resulting from the pandemic.

In regards to pay rates, the Legislature clearly articulated via the passage of Special Act No. 18-5 in 2018, that a wage differential between minimum wage and rates earned by Direct Support Professionals (DSP's) is not only warranted and earned, but essential to ensure quality care is provided.

This past year has unequivocally proved this statement to be true. When the state imposed restrictions due to the pandemic, our staff continued to show up to work, worked longer shifts and sacrificed their own health to ensure the health and safety of the individuals supported by DDS - They are truly heroes. We owe them a debt of gratitude as our collective efforts have resulted in one of the lowest death and infection rates across the country for individuals with intellectual disabilities. During one of our

MARC, Inc. of Manchester is a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization that supports people with developmental disabilities from Ashford, Bloomfield, Columbia, Coventry, East Hartford, Ellington, Glastonbury, Granby, Hartford, Manchester, Mansfield Depot, New Britain, Newington, South Glastonbury, South Windsor, Stafford Springs, Vernon/Rockville, West Hartford, Wethersfield and Windsor.

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A UNITED WAY AGENCY SERVING MANCHESTER AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

State's darkest times, they were there for us. I ask that you recognize the critical work and support they provide by increasing funding DDS services.

I would also like to take this time, to remind that you that the wage differential established via Special Act No. 18-5 is set to be reduced by another dollar this August and erode away completely by 2023.

An increase in funding will allow DDS to address wage disparities but also enable private providers such as MARC to work in partnership with DDS to address current and future needs of individuals and families impacted by the pandemic.

Over the past year, we have seen first-hand the anxiety, depression, isolation, job loss, reduction in employment opportunities and regression of skills which will need to be addressed as we enter the recovery phase of the pandemic.

Thank you for your time and for allowing me this opportunity to address the committee. Working TOGETHER we will continue to keep individuals safe and healthy during these unprecedented times.

Respectfully,

Kevin Zingler  
President & CEO