



Public Hearing 3.13.07

Raised SB #1338

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee I am Terrence W. Macy, Ph.D., the Executive Director of SARAH Tuxis Residential Services. I am speaking in support of your consideration of a 7% COLA for FY '08 and a 5% increase in FY '09.

SARAH Tuxis supports persons with developmental disabilities. Our service area includes the Connecticut shoreline from Stratford to Old Lyme. We employ over 200 staff and we constantly seek to provide them the best salaries and benefits possible. Unfortunately, the funds provided us by contract with DMR provide barely the basic hourly salary for them. Our entry hourly pay is essentially the same as that of local fast food establishments. The responsibilities our staff face on a dial basis however, is much greater. While we are still able to provide full time staff with health benefits we have not been able to raise the pay for the majority of our staff. The last COLA, which actually totaled only 1.5% was so small that we were only able to use it to pay for yet another large increase in our health benefits.

An equitable wage for our employees has been an unmet need for our 17 years of service. In our earliest days we could get by with paying lower wages to people who just wanted to provide good supports to persons with disabilities. Today we are rapidly approaching a crisis however, as the world we are forced to operate in becomes hugely regulated and all of us are being held to levels of accountability that are unrealistic. The staff of the past is no longer capable of keeping data or following complex protocols or providing documentation for Medicaid required services. Times have changed and it's no longer good enough to be "a nice person doing good work". While many of us support higher standards we are having increasingly greater difficulty finding and keeping staff who can meet today's standards.

The low wage pool proposed by the Governor would give a marginal increase in pay for some staff but would do nothing to help with our skyrocketing health care or energy or Workman's Compensation costs. We can't sustain a workable budget without assistance in keeping up with ever rising operations budgets. As noted above a 1.5% increase last year helped only with health benefits. Every year that goes by without a meaningful COLA means literally that more agencies like ours become more fiscally marginalized. This year some are in jeopardy of closing or certainly eliminating some services to the most needy in the state.

I am asking as I have for so many years for your help to stop the constant deterioration in support services to persons in significant need.

Respectfully submitted,

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