



**CONNECTICUT  
ASSOCIATION  
of NONPROFITS**

*...to serve, strengthen  
and support Connecticut's  
nonprofit community.*

**Testimony Before the Government Administration & Elections Committee**

**SB 678 An Act Establishing A Community-Based Health and Human Services Strategy Board**

**March 12, 2008**

Senator Slossberg, Rep. Caruso and members of the Government Administration & Elections Committee,

I am Cathy Zeiner, Executive Director of the Southeastern Connecticut Women's Center. I also serve as the President of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits. CT Nonprofits is a statewide association with over 300 of our more than 500 members contracting for provision of health and human services with Connecticut State government.

Our member organizations appreciate the Committee's initiative in raising the Strategy Board concept as a method of addressing the on-going and long term situation of the nonprofit sector doing business via state contracting.

Things that we have established:

- State of Connecticut increasingly relies on the nonprofit sector to help meet its mission of delivering health and human services to its citizens
- State of Connecticut does not pay actual cost of care or service for what it purchases
- State employees performing comparable work are compensated at an hourly wage rate 45-50% greater or beyond what private nonprofits pay. There is also a substantial gap in benefits.
- Annual Cost-of-living adjustments have not been sufficient for contractors to keep up with the standard indexes for inflation and, more importantly, the cost of operating programs & services.
- There is zero COLA proposed in the SFY 09 budget

Our members keep asking how can we get off the merry-go-round of year in & year-out having to keep asking for cost of living increases from the Governor & Legislature. Also, how can we pay our staff a more livable wage while at the same time continue to ensure quality care and service? We come back to you yearly asking that you help make our contracts more fair and that we be acknowledged as business entities that must meet a bottom line like any other business to stay sustainable. Our mission dictates that we also have another bottom line of meeting community needs. We must remain viable if we are to accomplish this. While we fundraise to compensate for the insufficient dollars paid through our contracts, we continue to provide services and programs but with potential future adverse consequences. In good times, our communities turn to us. In bad economic times, our communities need us even more.

Many of us feel it will require an initiative and priority of the Executive & Legislative Branches together if we are to realize long-term change. We are hoping that SB 678 will be a vehicle to a long term solution, at least a door or a window for us to access.