



February 26, 2008

**Human Services Committee
SB 413**

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY PROVIDER RESCUE FUND ACCOUNT AND
COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES COMMISSION.**

Good morning. My name is Heather Gates and I am the President/CEO of Community Health Resources. We are a community based provider of behavioral health services serving the communities east and north of Hartford. We have sites in clinic Enfield, Windsor, Bloomfield, Manchester, Vernon, and Willimantic as well as residential program throughout the area. We receive funding from DMHAS, DCF, DSS, CSSD, third party insurers, municipalities, United Way, and private donations. We serve over 4000 children, adolescents, families and adults every year.

I am speaking today as co-chair of public policy committee of the Connecticut Community Providers Association. CCPA represents organizations that provide services and supports to people with disabilities and other significant needs, including children and adults with substance use disorders, mental illness, developmental and physical disabilities.

Community providers are the backbone of Connecticut's human service system. For years community based providers have collaborated with the state to ensure that critical services are provided to children and adults in a manner that is accessible and affordable, yet maintains the highest standards of quality. We want to continue that partnership, but frankly with the current budget along with decades of under funding, we will not be able to continue services at current levels.

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Community providers have been under funded for more than 20 years. By every objective measure, budget increases to help our clients have failed to keep pace with inflation. It's not even close. While the Consumer Price Index has risen by nearly 90% in the last twenty years, cost of services increases for private providers have only gone up by about 28%. This disparity is placing increasing strain on our budgets and ultimately our clients – your constituents. This year we are asking for help once again on behalf of the people we serve.

We applaud this Committee for raising **SB 413** and urge your support of AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY PROVIDER RESCUE FUND ACCOUNT AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES COMMISSION. This legislation is designed to:

- Provide an immediate fix to shortfalls in the last two budget years
- Stabilize the system
- Create a new base for future funding growth
- Establish a consistent cost of service adjustment system to avoid future budget shortfalls

The legislation:

- Provides \$135 million to stabilize the system and provide adequate funding for this budget cycle.
- Creates a commission to develop a long term solution to community provider funding issues.
- Provides \$65 million for a capital improvements to address provider infrastructure.

Government acts most decisively when there is a crisis. For years we have been pleading for adequate funding to provide services to the most vulnerable citizens in Connecticut. Please support SB 413 before this fiscal problem becomes a healthcare crisis for the 500,000 individuals served by the community provider system.

Thank you for your time and attention.