



State of Connecticut

SENATE

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February 26, 2008

I am writing in support of SB 413, ***AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY PROVIDER RESCUE FUND ACCOUNT AND COMMUNITY-BASED SERVICES COMMISSION***. I am a long supporter of our community providers. They provide excellent care and homes for our citizens and deserve to be fairly compensated for their work. We have failed, time and time again to accommodate these providers with realistic monetary increases that will allow them to continue to provide services to a community in need. How many times have we neglected to give increases to our state employees who are actually doing the same work? Why do we recognize a cost of living adjustment for state employees but not the private providers?

I thank the Human Services Committee for proposing the creation of this account so the community providers, and their supporters, can be assured of continuous funding. The creation of this account, properly funded, coupled with the Commission on Community Based Services will give the legislature a clear picture of the need for a constant revenue stream for these providers and a framework for solutions. One only has to retrieve all the studies that have occurred over the last 15 years, and one realizes how chintzy that state has been in providing for these valued workers. I recognize as do they, that full parity will never be achieved, but we cannot allow the rift between state salaries and private providers to continue to widen. The ultimate result could be a state take over of all these providers. Has anyone figured out what that would cost the state?

I am grateful that the committee chose a short timeline for the commission to complete its work in August of this year. I expect that legislature will act in the January session to implement systemic changes to the funding stream for the community providers ensuring their long term existence for our population.

You have heard my arguments many times, but let me reiterate once again. We have a responsibility to all of our citizens; this includes those who receive services from our community providers and those who provide them. A cost of living adjustment should not be a policy decision or a negotiating chit in the budget. We owe it to our providers to adequately fund their services. I urge your support of this bill.

Please keep in mind that the private providers provide most of the services to the disabled community and do not get their proportionate of state dollars to do this. What is wrong with this system?

Thank you.