



Arc of Meriden-Wallingford, Inc.
200 Research Parkway, Meriden CT 06450
Telephone: (203) 237-9975 · Fax: (203) 639-0946
E-mail: mwshinc@snet.net
Founded 1952

Pamela Fields
Executive Director

Barry Sheftel
President

Good Afternoon, Senator Harp, Rep Geragosian and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Pam Fields, Executive Director at the Arc of Meriden Wallingford, Inc. and Board Member of CCPA. I am hear to speak to you concerning the possible freeze of DSS rates for group homes that provide services for people with developmental disabilities.

I am extremely concerned about this issue, as are the families of the individuals who reside in our group homes.

Like any home in the State of Connecticut, group homes have expenses such as the mortgage, heating, food and house costs, maintenance and physical plant upkeep, utilities, snow removal/landscaping and garbage pick up. Group homes are funded by both DSS, which covers these above costs, and DDS that cover staffing, training and transport. Now, as with any home when times are tough, we make decisions to turn down the heat and delay some maintenance items such as planting new trees, repaving a driveway, etc... however, there are expenses that are not able to be delayed such as mortgage payment, insurance, critical facility repairs such as furnace repair/replacement, cost of

food, heating and utilities. You just have to go on the internet and type in food prices to see the traumatic increase that has occurred since 2006, eggs increased 40 % and milk increased 26%. These two items alone show a big increase in the food bill. Fuel costs have increased over 24% in the past couple years.

When a decision is made to freeze a DSS rate without exempting critical line items that cannot be cut or decreased, it sends a very scary message to families. In a traditional home, family members could get a second job. In a Group Home there is no avenue available to increase the revenues to cover increased expenses.

If you freeze the food, cheaper less healthier food will have to be purchased. Moving from fresh vegetables to canned and increasing pasta dishes over lean meats and rice. The heat, utilities & mortgage will have to be paid no matter what; this will take away from the ability to do necessary maintenance & repairs. And what happens when the furnace goes? Where does the funding come from to replace it? Just in the past month, I have had to replace a washing machine, a stove and a refrigerator. Over the past two years, due to a previous 2% cap on DSS rates, our agency lost thousands of dollars when we did repairs in the homes and then found out that it was over the cap and would not be reimbursed. One of my homes is now in need of new windows. Two

need to be replaced immediately and unfortunately I will probably have to replace them one by one which in the long run will cost more. It is very scary when taking food and heat away from people with disabilities is the vehicle used to help balance the state budget. I do not think we want to send this message. I do not think our state wants to devalue people with disabilities just because it is an easy place to cut. I know there are very hard decisions to be made but hurting Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens cannot be one of them.

Thank you for your time

