



Oak Hill

Since 1893, services
& solutions for people
with disabilities.

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Supports Center at
Oak Hill

The Hartford Artisans'
Center at Oak Hill

Individual and Family
Supports Center at
Oak Hill

The NEAT Center
at Oak Hill

Oak Hill Birth to
Three Program

Oak Hill Camp

Oak Hill Center for
Relationship & Sexuality
Education

Oak Hill Day Services

Oak Hill Foundation, Inc.

Oak Hill Professional
Development

Oak Hill Residential
Services

Oak Hill School

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**TESTIMONY
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
CT GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2-20-09**

My name is Patrick Johnson and I am President of Oak Hill. I am also Vice-Chairman of the Board of CCPA. Oak Hill is the largest private provider of services to people with disabilities in CT with 109 sites in 58 towns. Oak Hill has 1,400 employees and 800 are members of District 1199 of the NEHCEU. Our operating budget is \$80,000,000. The 500 clients who live in our 60 group homes and 16 Intermediate care facilities, and attend our day programs all require supervision and support, all day, every day for the rest of their lives. They are not candidates for shelters or even at home care. For over twenty years our state contracts have averaged a 1.1% increase for the cost of care. For the past eight years it has been a 2% increase. 72% of my colleague agencies providing services to people with developmental disabilities were in deficit last year. Oak Hill's total operating deficit alone will grow to \$7.8 million in FY 2010. My staff has never had a raise in 20 years that met or exceeded the consumer price index. This year there are no raises for anyone and next year we have to ask for give backs from people already struggling to make ends meet working multiple jobs. We have and can hold wages flat but we can't control the cost of fuel, electricity, food, heating oil, liability insurance, health insurance and health and safety issues that must be addressed. They all rise with the cost of living.

The state is now facing the same issues we have been facing for decades. Our revenue is inadequate to cover our cost. We have managed to survive but many of us are anorexic organizations who provide services at half the cost of the state providing the same services. We are subject to incredible scrutiny through quality service reviews, license reviews, incident investigations, trend analysis, and individual case reviews. We are held to a standard that differs little from a hospital. We have cut our budgets to the bone. Administrative costs at Oak Hill are at 10% and average 12% among my colleagues. At the same time as we are given a zero increase DDS is now asking our day programs to meet a 90% attendance standard in an effort to further cut our reimbursement and save the state money. We are at the tipping point and I can tell you that Oak Hill will pursue concessions in our Union negotiations, which is hard to do with people who do a fantastic job despite never having gotten a real COLA. We will also be forced to close programs this year if we do not receive relief. When we close programs they will be rebid but at 2010 costs. Who in their right mind would bid on them knowing that in 2011 they will be in deficit again. In the long run this will not save the state a penny. As someone who has a family member who is in one of our group homes I share the great anxiety of our families who see a new version of institutionalization emerging twenty years after closing Mansfield Training School.

There are some things the state can learn from us about how to survive with less but there is a tipping point where our Boards of Directors face the moral dilemma of the life boat with too many people on board. We no longer have the resources necessary to assure safety and quality care for those on board with us and unless we get a life raft tossed to us for FY 2010 either the number of people served has to be reduced or the whole boat is in jeopardy. We know how to survive the hard times but we can't survive freezing in the dark with no food.

Respectfully submitted
Patrick J. Johnson Jr.