

*Testimony before the Appropriations Committee Re:*

**H.B. No. 6365: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE 30, 2011 AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**

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Public Hearing Date: February 23, 2009

Good afternoon, Senator Handley, Representative McCrory and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Julia Wilcox, Policy Specialist for the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits.) CT Nonprofits is a membership organization that represents more than 525 nonprofit agencies. Approximately 300 of our member agencies contract with State government for a variety of human and social services. This afternoon, I am proud to represent the Community Justice and Juvenile Justice Divisions of providers who contract with DOC & Judicial / CSSD.

As you are no doubt aware, the Governor's Biennial Budget does not include any cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) funding for FY10 or FY11. While we greatly appreciate that so many of you have been supportive of the efforts and value of the nonprofit community provider network, we never the less, find ourselves in a situation which becomes more desperate with each new plan or proposal. As the Governor releases yet a third mitigation plan, state agencies and their partners in the non-profit community, struggle to understand the full ramifications of the first two! All the while – the need for services continues to increase, as the resources for provision continue to decrease.

For years, nonprofit providers have come before you and testified in favor of expanding treatment programs and alternatives to incarceration. In these fiscally challenging times, this strategy is not only best for the populations directly served through the criminal justice system, but for the state of Connecticut – as an extensive cost savings measure, which not only increases public safety, but strengthens the very fabric of our communities. As you continue your efforts to address the state budget crisis, it is essential to view the support of community-based, re-entry services (as provided by the nonprofit provider network) not as an 'expense,' but rather – an 'investment' in human capital and the welfare of our state.

On behalf of the nonprofit provider community, I respectfully submit commentary on the following, specific areas of the Governor's Budget Recommendations, related to the DOC and CSSD Budgets as follows:

- ⇒ NO COST OF LIVING INCREASE (COLA) FOR THE NONPROFIT PROVIDER COMMUNITY: (Oppose)  
While we appreciate that the Governor's Budget did not include 'across the board' cuts to human services as provided by the nonprofit network, it is essential to note that even level funding, equates to a 'cut,' given the years of chronic under-funding, and ever-rising costs of providing services. As previously stated, it is essential to view the support of community-based, re-entry services (as provided by the nonprofit provider network) not as an 'expense,' but rather – an 'investment' in human capital and the welfare of our state.
- ⇒ DELAY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RAISE THE AGE INITIATIVE: (Oppose) The Juvenile Jurisdiction change was scheduled to go into effect January 1, 2010. This important initiative will significantly alter the existing juvenile courts by potentially doubling the number of juveniles that these courts currently handle. In light of the state's economic condition and the continuing effort to finalize the implementation plan, the Governor is proposing that this initiative be delayed for two years with a new effect date of January 1, 2012.

We would implore the Legislature to do everything in your power, to assure that the critical progress and

momentum that has been made in this area, is not lost due to short-sighted 'cost savings.' In reality, delay in the implementation of the RTA Initiative, will end up costing the state dearly – in both the dollars that will be necessary to address the increase in unmet needs of the juvenile population, and the 'loss' in terms of delayed progress for the individual youth and families involved.

- ⇒ REINSTATEMENT OF RE-ENTRY FURLOUGHS: (Support) Legislation is proposed to reinstate and expand the Commissioner of Correction's authority to place inmates on re-entry furlough for up to 45 days. The re-entry furlough will provide accountability, support and aftercare services to offenders being released from correctional facilities for a period of approved community supervision. Offenders must have an approved community sponsor, demonstrated responsible behavior while incarcerated and an assessed need for transitional services. This program had a successful completion rate of 97% in the past and was the most successful discretionary program available to the incarcerated population. Evidence based research clearly demonstrates that a period of community supervision and targeted interventions lowers the risk of recidivism. We strongly recommend the support of this initiative, as a critical part of the re-entry process, with proven results.
- ⇒ COMMUNITY-BASED BEDS / RE-ENTRY SERVICES: (Support) Finally, we would implore the Legislature to fully fund, and utilize the willingness, capacity and quality afforded to the state by the nonprofit community which partners with the state on a daily basis.

Most offenders who enter prison will eventually return to a community. In Connecticut, more than 95% of prison inmates leave the prison system and re-enter society. Statistics universally support the significant correlation between supervised, community re-entry services, and a reduction in recidivism. Most recently, according to the State of Connecticut 2009 Annual Recidivism Study: "Offenders that were discharged after completing community supervision programs, like parole or transitional supervision (TS), had the lowest recidivism rates among all groups of offenders in the study. While 36.7% of all offenders were re-incarcerated for new offenses within 3 years of release, 27.4% of TS completers and 23.4% of parole completers were returned to prison for new offenses."

The significance and value of community-based services becomes even more clearly defined, when the cost savings to the state are factored in as follows:

- ⇒ Average annual cost per inmate – DOC/Prison Facilities = \$31,000-\$64,000
- ⇒ Average annual cost per offender - community residential treatment programs = \$20,000 - \$22,000.

These statistics illustrate only the 'functional' cost savings. They do not begin to reflect the savings in terms of 'human capital,' or the effect that the reduction in recidivism has upon the families and communities of our state.

To this end, it is critical for the communities of Connecticut to understand that supervised re-entry into their communities – and NOT a system of extended incarceration, is critical to increasing public safety, by ending the cycle of recidivism and strengthening and healing these families in crisis.

We would ask that

- ⇒ Support sentencing that supports the re-entry process.
- ⇒ Important to look at programs from a standpoint of the effect on 'End of Sentence' outcomes, and not simply reducing prison capacity.
- ⇒ Utilization of full capacity available within the communities of CT

In closing, I would encourage you to contact providers within your local communities. The ability of the state of CT to adequately meet the needs of its residents is greatly dependent upon the ability of the Private Provider Community to sustain a vibrant network, which will continue to serve as the ultimate safety net for Connecticut's citizens at risk.

I thank you for your time and consideration of these critically important issues. I would be pleased to answer any questions at this time.

Related Information of Interest:

⇒ For information related to DOC funded programs of the private provider network available within your communities, please refer to the following:

Directory of Contracted Community Programs: Connecticut Department of Correction - Parole and Community Services, Theresa C. Lantz, Commissioner, Randy Braren, Director of Parole and Community Services, Lawrence P. Mayer, Director of Programs and Services (July 2008)  
<http://www.ct.gov/doc/lib/doc/pdf/contractedcommprogdirectory.pdf>

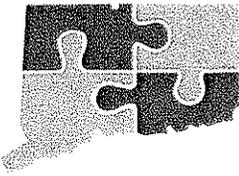
⇒ State of Connecticut 2009 Recidivism Study: Annual report published in response to the statutory requirements outlined in Public Act 05-249. The legislation created the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division (CJPPD) within the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and tasked the Division with issuing an annual report on the recidivism of offenders released from the custody of the Department of Correction (DOC) and from probation. (February 2009)  
[http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjresearch/recidivismstudy/20090215\\_recidivismstudy.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjresearch/recidivismstudy/20090215_recidivismstudy.pdf)

⇒ 2008 Annual Report: 1968 -2008, Connecticut Department of Correction  
<http://www.ct.gov/doc/lib/doc/PDF/PDFReport/annualreport2008.pdf>

⇒ Juvenile Jurisdiction Policy and Operations Coordinating Council: <http://www.housedems.ct.gov/jjpooc/index.asp>

*For additional information, Please do not hesitate to contact:*

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## **When Connecticut needs us most, this is what we need to be there for Connecticut.**

It's no secret that nonprofits have been struggling for years. With no COLA for FY09, it brings the 20 year average cost-of-living-adjustment for nonprofits to an abysmal 1.1%. It has come to be expected that we will do more with less. And while we have often lived up to that expectation, it simply cannot last forever. As energy and healthcare costs continue to skyrocket, it is growing increasingly difficult to provide the level of service that the state has become accustomed to and that the residents deserve. Now, with a grave downturn in the economy, more Connecticut residents are showing up on doorsteps asking for assistance and we are unsure of how we will be able to help.

How nonprofits across the state are coping with pervasive under-funding\*:

- **Turnover:** This continues to be a problem within the nonprofit sector. Quality employees are consistently lost to higher paying jobs either with the state (where they can earn approximately 50% more to perform comparable work) or outside of the field altogether. In 2008, the average turnover in our member agencies among full-time employees was 19%; among part-time employees it was 28%.
- **Consolidating Responsibilities:** Instead of filling vacancies created by turnover or layoffs, agencies are consolidating those job responsibilities among existing staff, creating more work with no additional compensation possible. 48% of member agencies have already begun consolidating in the current fiscal year.
- **Waiting Lists:** Without funding for additional staff many agencies simply do not have the capacity to meet increased demands for service, resulting in 45% of member agencies creating waiting lists in the current fiscal year.
- **Eliminating Programs:** In some cases, programs must be eliminated altogether. Currently, 27% of our member agencies have begun eliminating programs.

What we need:

- **Meaningful Cost Increases:** 1.1% over 20 years simply won't do. Nonprofits that contract with the state to provide health and human services on its behalf are often the foundation of their communities. The services they provide help to prevent larger, more costly problems for taxpayers.
- **Long-term Solutions:** The year-in-year-out cycle of wondering whether or not nonprofits will receive a cost-of-living increase is a rollercoaster that no one enjoys. It takes up significant amounts of time of both advocates and government officials. A meaningful, long-term solution that ensures nonprofits receive annual, adequate increases equal to the cost of providing services is urgently needed.
- **Healthcare Reform:** One of the largest costs that nonprofits face is health insurance. Many agencies continue to see percentage increases in the double digits, often having to pass some of that increase onto their employees, only worsening the problem of under-compensation. Despite the hardship, few nonprofits are willing to eliminate this benefit and jeopardize the health and safety of their employees.

\* Results of CT Nonprofits' Impact Survey; Sept. 2008; n=44