



March 19, 2010

To: Government Administration and Elections Committee

From: Terry Edelstein, President/CEO

**Re: TESTIMONY: S. B. 472 AAC STATE AGENCY PERMISSIVE IN-STATE CONTRACTING PREFERENCES AND A PILOT PROGRAM FOR JANITORIAL EMPLOYEES**

Please accept this testimony in support of the pilot program for janitorial employees, section 3 of S.B. 472.

The Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA) represents organizations that provide services and supports for adults and children with disabilities and other significant challenges including children and adults with mental illness, substance use disorders, developmental and physical disabilities. Community providers serve more than 500,000 of the state's most vulnerable residents.

We appreciate the Committee including language in S.B. 472 that would extend the term of the pilot program for janitorial work for disadvantaged or disabled persons from four years to seven years. This legislation is vital to maintaining employment for hundreds of people with disabilities supported through the Preferred Purchasing Program and would help to provide additional time to pilot the new program incorporating employment opportunities for people with disabilities and those with economic disadvantages.

In 1977 the Legislature established a Preferred Purchasing Program (PA 77-405; CGS 17b-656) to address low employment rates for people with disabilities, promoting employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities through government contracting. CCPA

**CCPA**

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administers this Preferred Purchasing Program. Through the Program, community providers supply state agencies with needed products and services rendered by people with disabilities. The Program has produced employment, employment training, work hours and wages for people with disabilities in a variety of work settings, including janitorial services, office settings, commercial laundry, landscaping, and manufacturing sites.

Success of the Preferred Purchasing Program in FY09 includes:

- \$2.6 million in wages (bringing the total over the last ten years to \$23 million for workers with severe disabilities)
- Employment opportunities for 819 people with disabilities

In 2006, the Legislature modernized this program by creating the Qualified Partnership Pilot Program (PA 06-129 CGS 4a-82). The purpose of this Public Act was to establish a pilot program that would promote employment for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages with commercial sector janitorial contractors and to evaluate the effectiveness of such a program for use on a larger scale as a method for addressing the employment needs of these two groups. The Public Act was also instrumental in resolving differences between two competing groups advocating for standard wage opportunities for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages while protecting the jobs of others through worker retention language. S.B. 472 would extend this important pilot to protect employment opportunities for workers with disabilities, allow for additional time to meet the pilot goals and thoroughly evaluate the pilot.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.