



March 9, 2010

CCPA Testimony – Human Services Committee

S. B. No. 316 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION ON NONPROFIT HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

We are pleased to speak in support of SB 316, An Act Establishing a Commission on Nonprofit Health And Human Services.

I am Terry Edelstein, President/CEO of 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 worked collaboratively with members of the Nonprofit Human Services Cabinet in developing the concept for this bill and we are extremely pleased that the Human Services Committee has raised this bill for public hearing.

Your Committee took a leadership role in convening public hearings earlier this year through a Legislative Task Force on Community-Based Human Services. At these hearings you heard from parents, consumers and community providers about our long struggle to provide community based services and supports.

There were challenges to community based funding from its early days. In 1991, the Legislature created a Blue Ribbon Commission on Fair Wages, the first effort by the Legislature to resolve funding issues for private providers. Even after the Commission completed its work, in those difficult fiscal times community providers lost 4% of their contract funding.

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The funding crisis didn't go away and other initiatives followed:

- A proposal to index community based human services in relation to state employee wages
- A proposal for a Community Provider Rescue Fund
- Legislation initiated by the Human Services Committee in both the 2008 and 2009 sessions to create a Community Based Services Commission
- Legislation developed by the GAE Committee in 2008 to support a Community Based Services Commission that was passed by the Legislature but vetoed by the Governor

Community providers have experienced over twenty five years with limited cost of living increases and they are falling farther and farther behind the Medical Consumer Price Index. If the state has the intent of continuing to contract for community-based human services to address the vital health and human service needs of Connecticut residents, it should make a commitment to developing a long term solution.

This proposed legislation provides a vehicle for identifying and resolving funding issues of community providers and we very much appreciate your support in developing a long term solution to the provision of community-based services.