



THE KENNEDY CENTER

Celebrating the Potential of All People

September 27, 2011

To: The Program Review and Investigations Committee

From: The Kennedy Center, Inc.

Ref: Public Hearing on DDS issues.

Thank you Co-chairs Senator Fonfara and Rep. Rowe, and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee for providing me with the opportunity to speak on behalf of The Kennedy Center, a not-for-profit organization, like many others in the state assisting and supporting individuals with disabilities.

In my thirty-two year tenure as its President and CEO, and throughout its history, The Kennedy Center has worked in collaboration with the state and in partnership with our local communities, to ensure a high quality of life for those we serve. The organization was founded in 1951 when a group of parents and friends of children with intellectual disabilities joined together to create systemic change and seek equality for individuals with disabilities and special needs.

Evelyn Kennedy and the founders of The Kennedy Center were responsible for writing Connecticut legislation that established the first classes for children with intellectual disabilities in public schools in New England. As leaders of change, they, along with representatives of other nonprofit organizations throughout the State, were instrumental in the establishment of the Department of Mental Retardation, which later became Connecticut's Department of Developmental Services (DDS). The Kennedy Center also opened the first group homes for men and women with intellectual disabilities in Connecticut.

Like so many of the other grassroots private providers, much of The Kennedy Center's **innovation is a direct result of our closeness to the community which has allowed us to be the first to see and respond to the needs of those we serve.**

Today, The Kennedy Center offers comprehensive services to nearly 2,000 individuals with special needs and disabilities from birth through their senior years. Since 1981, **The Kennedy Center has consistently achieved the highest level of accreditation through CARF International, and is distinguished for having obtained three perfect accreditation surveys.**

We recognize the importance of state government, the value of our local communities, the input of families and the significant roles that each has played in supporting those

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we serve. Unfortunately, today Connecticut is facing major financial challenges. **No matter what our personal interests may be, we all share the common goals** of caring for our most vulnerable populations and securing the financial future of this great state.

So, where do we go from here? We know we have a responsibility to support individuals with disabilities and special needs. We all know we need a practical cost-effective method that provides this support throughout our entire state.

The present dual State/Private Provider system of offering services has raised many issues. Can we afford to support a system where state and private providers duplicate services with great cost disparity, and salary inequity? Nonprofit providers have received no increase for 4 years and over a 15 year period have received an increase of about 1.2% on average.¹ A far different scenario from their counterparts. Can the state budget continue to sustain this bifurcated system, or **should we pursue a unified system, whereby services do not overlap, wages are fair and equitable, and accountability is uniformly applied?** I fear that if we continue on our present course, our service delivery system will falter. I feel we must work together to address this problem if Connecticut is to maintain the highest standard of quality care that our most vulnerable citizens deserve.

I believe we all realize that we cannot maintain the status quo. Even if we are to look beyond the myriad of inherent inefficiencies, **the dollars are simply not there to fund it.** We need a new model that will ensure high quality service while creating the level of cost effectiveness necessary to alleviate the growing taxpayer burden. I suggest that committee members consider an examination of data, both qualitative and quantitative, to determine how other states have transitioned to a singular system of care. Although presenting many challenges, as identified in today's Legislative Program Review & Investigations Committee Staff Briefing, **it is our belief that we must all work together to create a unified network that is highly sensitive to the needs of families and recognizes all stakeholders, including taxpayers.** Whether private organizations ultimately provide the direct care services and the state serves as a strong partner by focusing on contracting and quality assurance **or** we identify another model, **we must find common ground** that will allow us to move forward and lay the foundation for a unified network.

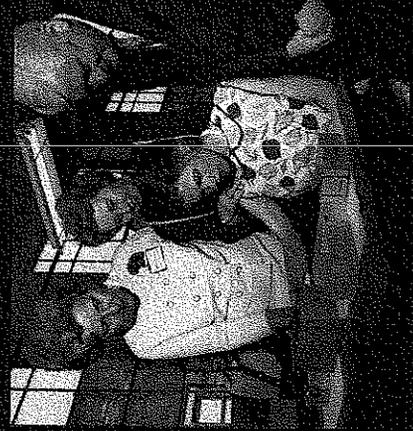
I had referenced the following analogy at a previous legislative briefing, and I feel it bears repeating. For those of you who remember the Mianus River Bridge disaster of 1983, news reports at the time indicated that there were warnings of a potential disaster—strange sounds coming from the bridge segment that ultimately gave way. Ladies and Gentlemen, you are hearing those sounds now. **I urge you to heed those sounds and work with me, my fellow private providers, and all interested stakeholders throughout Connecticut in the development of a unified, cost effective, high quality system of service delivery for some of our most vulnerable and highly deserving citizens of the State of Connecticut.**

1. Cost Comparison Work Group report, February 28, 2011.

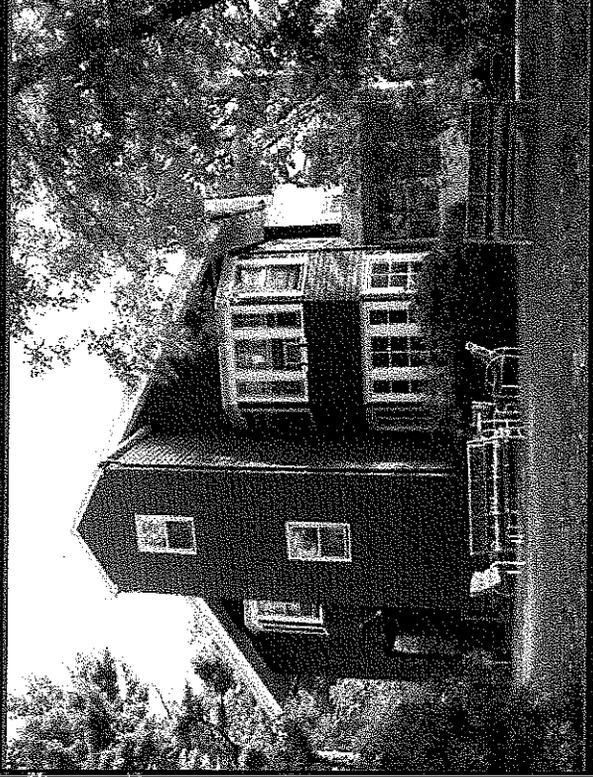
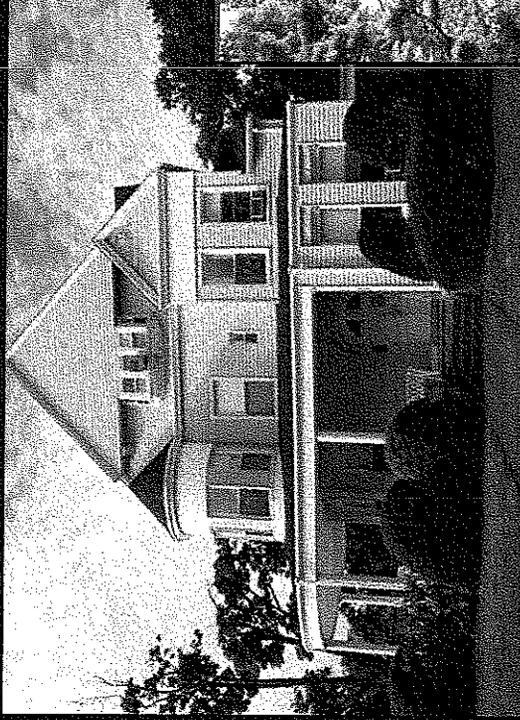
"TOGETHER"
we can BUILD a
Unified Network of Care



History of Collaboration



Responding to Emerging Needs



Program Innovation



Travel Training



Alzheimer's Program



Caring for the Caregiver



High Standard of Quality Care



We Need a Cost Effective Solution



Partner Together



Create a Unified Network



Mianus River Bridge



UNITED - we can achieve more

