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...to serve, strengthen
and support Connecticut's
nonprofit community.

Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee
Health & Hospitals Subcommittee - DDS Budget

House Bill No. 5014: 'AA MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES AND
REVENUES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2013.'

Presented By:

Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist, Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits.)

Public Hearing Date: February 22, 2012

Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee: I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you this evening. My name is Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist for the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits.) CT Nonprofits is the largest membership organization in Connecticut, dedicated exclusively to working with nonprofits. We represent more than 530 nonprofit organizations. Approximately 300 of our member agencies contract with State government to provide a variety of human and social services on its behalf. This evening, I am proud to represent members of the Developmental Disabilities Division of CT Nonprofits, who are funded by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS.)

Cost of Living Increase (COLA):

First and foremost, CT Nonprofits supports and greatly appreciates Governor Malloy's ongoing commitment to the nonprofit provider community, as demonstrated by the proposed 1% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA.) As you are aware, nonprofits play a significant role in our state's economy as both large and small employers that serve hundreds of thousands of residents annually. Nonprofits have continued to function in this role as a vital partner for the State – even in the historic absence of essential, financial support. As you are aware, the ever-increasing cost of providing services is matched only by the increasing demands for these services, as experienced by so many within the communities of our State.

In an effort to begin a journey on the path to sustainability, CT Nonprofits requests that the Committee considers extending the FY13 COLA adjustment to begin July 1, 2012, as opposed to the proposed January 1, 2013. This would provide the opportunity for nonprofits that contract with the state to realize a full 1% COLA in FY13.

Department of Developmental Services (DDS):

House Bill No. 5014 includes several areas of adjustments to the Department of Developmental Services Budget, which CT Nonprofits supports and appreciates. It is important to note that these adjustments are in keeping with the Five Year Plan, developed by Commissioner Macy and the current DDS Administration. Governor Malloy is to be commended for the following adjustments which will serve to improve the quality of life for a significant number of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities:

- Fund Recommendations in the Autism Feasibility Study
- Increase Revenue for Employment and Day Services
- Close Additional Public Residential Programs (Relocation of 40 individuals from Southbury Training School to more appropriate, community-based homes.)

- Provide Planning Funds for Comprehensive Waiver Management System (Maximization of Federal Reimbursements.)

While the adjustments previously noted above are clearly significant in terms of their positive impact upon the DDS System of Services and all stakeholders, there remain other areas of great concern, which must be addressed, including the following examples:

- The ever-present Waiting List for individuals in need of residential supports
- Ever-increasing needs of an aging population, with increasing medical, emotional and programmatic needs.
- Increasingly aging facilities - residential and day / vocational, with little opportunity for necessary, timely improvements.
- Room and Board Rate Freezes – Within the Department of Social Services (DSS) Budget

As you continue your efforts to address the state budget, it is essential to view the support of human and social 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.

In closing, I would encourage you to contact nonprofit providers within your local communities. The ability of the state to adequately meet the needs of its residents is greatly dependent upon the ability of the Nonprofit 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. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time, with questions, or for additional information:

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THE PATH TO LONG TERM SOLUTIONS:

As we continue our efforts in search of long-term solutions, within the past year, the Legislature has shown some 'light' on the horizon. Specific to services provided in partnership with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Development of the following entity has provided exceptional opportunities to continue these efforts – in collaboration with the State:

Department of Developmental Services' Rate Transition Workgroup: January, 2012

Deb Heinrich, Nonprofit Liaison to the Governor
Pat Bourne, Executive Director, SARAH Inc., Co-Chair
Peter Mason, Director, Operations Center, Department of Developmental Services, Co-Chair

Section 57 of Public Act 09-3 (SSS) and Section 4-1a of the Connecticut General Statutes was signed into law effective October 1, 2009. The Act established an Advisory Committee for Services under Programs Administered by the Department of Developmental Services. The committee was charged with studying the impact of the shift from Purchase of Service contract to utilization-based rates for DDS funded programs.

In a report of their findings published in January, 2011, the committee recommended that the rate transition be developed through a collaborative private/public effort. The DDS Rate Transition Workgroup was convened in response to that recommendation.

The DDS Rate Transition Workgroup was initially charged to develop a transition plan for all DDS funded day services. The workgroup was divided into 2 sub-committees. The Transition and Implementation Sub-Committee was charged with establishing the process and procedures to implement the rate transition by January 1, 2012. The Sustainability Sub-Committee was charged with recommending a rate structure for services based on sustainable wages and benefits and the impact of indexing to ensure sustainability over the long term.

The final report shall be forthcoming. CT Nonprofits urges the Legislature to support the ongoing efforts of this critically significant initiative.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

- CT Nonprofits' 2012 Cross-Sector Policy Priorities.
- CT Nonprofits' 2012 Developmental Disabilities Division Policy Priorities