

To:

Senator Harp

Representative Walker

Members of the Appropriations Committee

From:

Pam Fields

Executive Director

Arc or Meriden Wallingford

Member of CCPA

First, I would like to thank you for all the time and effort you have put in and will be continuing to put in, to balance the state budget. I am sure you will do this in a way that is fair and equitable to all the citizens of Connecticut. These times present difficult challenges to do what is needed for our state, especially when it is much easier to cut across the board. The Community Providers in Connecticut face a very difficult challenge and that is to balance their budgets with the cuts that are included in the governor's budget, along with the cuts that come parenthetically from increased expenses.

The Arc of Meriden Wallingford has had to make drastic cuts to balance over \$40,000 in cuts to our state funding and \$110,000 of increased expenses. These increased expenses include insurance, workers compensation, food and fuel. The increases ranged from 20% to 5%. The situation has required our agency to lay off six employees, hold the retirement contribution for employees, hold tuition reimbursement and reduce hours for two other positions. Like you, I am now working on my budget for next year and am again faced with deficits in the six figures. However this time, I will be unable to refrain from effecting services of the individuals we serve. My dilemma will be which of the 300 people will be affected. The ones who have jobs in the community but need support to maintain that employment as they work to free themselves from requiring state assistance; the children with autism that live at home with their parents that require assistance to remain in their family homes; or the ones that require total care with feeding tubes, hourly positioning and personal care? Like your decisions, mine will not be easy either.

It is time the State works on a comprehensive plan to address the chronic under funding of the most cost effective system the State has for providing the services to its most vulnerable citizens. The good part is, you have already done most of the work and have detailed reports from several commissions including the most recent report "Governors Cabinet on Non Profit Health and Human Services". These reports include information about the condition of the community provider system due to continual underfunding and neglect; it provides information about the cost effectiveness of the community provider system; and it provides recommendations.

The next piece of information you will need is the federal requirements from CMS and how the state has structured its services and rate system. This agreement with the federal government puts restrictions and requirements on how services can and must be provided including, equal rates and reimbursement for equal services.

The third piece of information needed will be data on a livable wage. Right now we have a group of people who are receiving services provided by another group of people, who are kept at poverty level because of the reimbursement structure.

You can do things now to make an immediate difference by limiting any negative funding decisions for this sector; allowing retention of revenues at the end of the year in order to reinvest in the system and shore-up its resources; reduce unfunded mandates that will allow resources to be reallocated to more efficient use; and incentivize service providers to provide the most cost effective services.

The legislature is currently requiring a results based accountability system when State Departments are reporting system outcomes. This system requires starting with a result that is expected and setting up objectives to get there. This system can provide a strong direction and outline of where the system is going and help keep it on track. The state could utilize this system to guide the progress of this comprehensive plan.

Following these steps and others that have not yet been identified, the State can begin to provide services to its most vulnerable citizens in the most cost effective way. Therefore, meeting its obligation for services and its obligation to run the State in the most fiscally responsible manner.

You have your work cut out for you. The Community Provider System, your partner in providing services, stand by ready to assist you in your efforts to provide Connecticut's citizens with a high quality service system, which meets the needs of its people, at a price the tax payers can afford.