TESTIMONY TO THE HEALTH AND HOSPITALS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE FEBRUARY 15, 2013

Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon, members of the Appropriations Subcommittee, I am Stephen Becker, President and CEO at HARC, Inc., an organization that serves people with intellectual and related disabilities. Founded in 1951, HARC is a grassroots family organization that provides life span services including: birth-to-three/early intervention, family support, respite, supported employment, adult day program, recreation, residential, behavioral health, elderly and advocacy services.

For over sixty years, the State of Connecticut has relied on HARC and other community organizations to provide excellent, cost-effective care to Connecticut's citizens with intellectual and related disabilities. We have done everything possible to demonstrate the value we bring to the State of Connecticut and the invaluable services we provide to over 1500 families every year. Yet, year after year, we prevail upon the legislature to make no further cuts to the DDS budget and to provide adequate funds to support agencies whose services the Legislative Program Review Committee itself has identified as a safe, cost-effective source of support for citizens with intellectual disability.

We are now at an economic crossroads, doing all we can to avoid facing our own "fiscal cliff". Years of funding shortfalls have resulted in our freezing positions and passing on to our staff increases in health care costs we simply cannot absorb. Although Governor Malloy provided a one percent wage increase effective this year, that increase was effectively eliminated by the rescissions, not to mention the reinstatement of the two-percent federal payroll tax. Private dollars, which we once used to provide additional services not offered by the state, are now going to fill the ever-widening gap between state funding and the actual costs of providing

services. Our agency is not immune to the increased costs of gas, heating fuel and other utilities. The cuts to funding, whether in the form of rescissions, flat funding or outright withdrawal of promised funds, are unrelenting. We have done all we can to maintain services for our families and jobs for our staff. With the current rescissions, now annualized, and more to come in the next fiscal year, we can do no more.

Now, people with intellectual disability live and work in the community, enjoy time with family and friends and are often their own most effective advocates. Budget cuts place all of these advances at risk. We have embodied the Governor's motto of "shared sacrifice" for the past two decades. Now is the time for the State of Connecticut to pay adequate and fair compensation to those community providers who deliver excellent care to Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens. Rather than cut funding to community providers, we urge the State to follow the counsel of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee's January 2012 report, which found that private providers are the most cost-effective provider of residential services to people with intellectual disability, and devote more resources to the vulnerable people served by community providers.

As more cuts loom, some providers, already poised precariously on the cliff of financial ruin, will most certainly succumb to the inordinate pressure of delivering services without adequate funding. In the end, those citizens that cannot be served will be more costly to the state. Parents who cannot receive services in community-based settings will be forced to stay home to stay home to care for their children, resulting in fewer working, tax-paying citizens, a circumstance the State can hardly afford.

We certainly are not naïve to the state's fiscal crisis, but in the end, it makes more economic sense to adequately fund the state's more cost-effective service delivery system than to

continue to deprive that system of resources, forcing more and more citizens into costly state-run options, like Husky, emergency room visits, emergency shelters and parents forced to leave the work force to care for their children with disabilities.

We remain committed to our mission to improve the lives of our clients and their families. All we ask is that the state honors its commitment to its partnership with community providers forged so long ago, to which we have been faithful, by providing fair and adequate funding for critical services.

Thank you for devoting so much time and energy to serve the citizens of Connecticut and for protecting its most vulnerable people.