TESTIMONY

HEALTH & HOSPITALS SUBCOMMITTEE

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

CT. GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2-15-13

MY NAME IS PATRICK JOHNSON AND I AM PRESIDENT OF OAK HILL, A NONPROFIT COMMUNITY PROVIDER OF SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES WITH OVER 100 SITES IN 58 TOWNS THROUGHOUT CT. I SINCERELY APPRECIATE YOUR BEING HERE THIS EVENING TO HEAR OUR CONCERNS.

MY FRIENDS IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION TELL ME THAT THERE IS IN LAW A FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION CALLED THE REASONABLE PERSON RULE. SO TO DETERMINE THE PRUDENCE OF AN ACTION THE QUESTION IS ASKED; WHAT WOULD A REASONABLE PERSON DO?

IF YOU HIRED SOMEONE TO PLOW YOUR SNOW SEVEN YEARS AGO WOULD YOU, A REASONABLE PERSON, EXPECT THAT YOUR SNOW PLOW PERSON WOULD CONTINUE TO PLOW FOR THE SAME PRICE AS SEVEN YEARS AGO?

WHEN YOU DRIVE INTO A GAS STATION WOULD YOU DEMAND THAT THEY CHARGE YOU NO MORE THAN THE COST OF GASOLINE 7 YEARS AGO? (THE LAST TIME OUR STATE CONTRACTS HAD A NET INCREASE GASOLINE WAS $1.87 PER GALLON AND WE HAVE 184 VANS ON THE ROAD EVERY DAY.)

WOULD YOU GO TO THE GROCERY STORE AND EXPECT TO BE CHARGED THE SAME PRICE FOR BREAD, MILK, CEREAL, AND CHICKEN AS 7 YEARS AGO? CURRENTLY FOOD COSTS AVERAGE $6.44 PER DAY FOR THE 400 PEOPLE IN OUR RESIDENCES. THAT IS $2.15 PER MEAL.

THE BUDGET CURRENTLY UNDER CONSIDERATION EXPECTS THAT WE CAN ACHIEVE INCREASED EFFICIENCIES. WE CAN'T. AFTER OVER 20 YEARS OF CHRONIC UNDERFUNDING THERE ARE NO MORE EFFICIENCIES TO ACHIEVE. IT IS A MYTH THAT OUR FUNDING HAS BEEN FLAT FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS. EVERY YEAR WITH NO NET REVENUE INCREASE RESULTS IN A DEFACTO CUT EQUAL TO THE CPI. MY DIRECT CARE STAFF HAVE NOT HAD AN INCREASE IN WAGES IN FIVE YEARS AND NOW WE HAVE TO CUT WAGES AND BENEFITS OR CLOSE PROGRAMS. WE ARE AT THE TIPPING POINT. WE ARE AT THE FISCAL CLIFF. THE MOST EFFICIENT PROVIDERS ARE BEING DRIVEN OUT OF BUSINESS. WE ARE GRATEFUL TO GOVERNOR MALLOY FOR THE I% COLA WHICH SOFTENS THE BLOW BUT WE WILL HAVE AT LEAST A HALF MILLION DOLLAR LOSS ON TOP OF A MAJOR DEFICIT. WE NEED A 4% INCREASE IN FY 2014 AND A 3% INCREASE IN FY2015 TO SIMPLY STAY WHERE WE ARE NOW AND MEET FIXED COST INCREASES. EVERY YEAR AT OAK HILL THAT WE DO NOT GET AT LEAST A 2% INCREASE WE HAVE TO ABSORB A $1,000,000 LOSS. HOW LONG COULD A REASONABLE PERSON EXPECT THIS TO GO ON?

WITH OVER 20 YEARS OF CHRONIC UNDERFUNDING AND FIVE YEARS OF NO NET INCREASES AND NOW AN ADDITIONAL TWO YEARS OF CUTS AND NO NET INCREASE HOW CAN A REASONABLE PERSON ASSUME THIS SHOULD BE DONE OR CAN BE DONE?

AFTER MANAGING HUMAN SERVICES FOR 45 YEARS I AM PROFOUNDLY CONCERNED THAT WE ARE FORGETTING WHY WE ARE HERE AND WHO BENEFITS. AT OAK HILL WE PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES 24 HOURS PER DAY TO APPROXIMATELY 400 PEOPLE WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES. WHAT WOULD A REASONABLE PERSON ASSUME HAPPENS WHEN PRIVATE AGENCIES UNDER CONTRACT TO THE STATE ARE TREATED LIKE SUPPLIERS TO WALMART? IT IS ACTUALLY WORSE BECAUSE THOSE SUPLIERS CAN EXPECT SOME MARGIN. THE MAJORITY OF MY COLLEAGUE AGENCIES ARE IN DEFICIT NOW. ALL I ASK IS THAT YOU CONSIDER THE FACTS AND CONSIDER CAREFULLY THE QUESTION; WHAT WOULD A REASONABLE PERSON DO? PLEASE DON'T SHRED THE SAFETY NET! PLEASE DO THE RIGHT THING AND INCREASE FUNDING FOR PRIVATE NONPROFIT PROVIDERS IN FY 2014 AND 2015!!

Patrick J. Johnson Jr.

President of CT Institute for the Blind Inc d.b.a. Oak Hill

120 Holcomb St.

Hartford, CT. 06112 johnsonp@ciboakhill.org tel. # 860-769-3801