



**CT Community Providers Association**

**Caring for Connecticut**

**To: Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee**

**From: Kirk Springsted, Vice President, CT Community Providers Association**

**Re: Government Administration and Elections Committee Public Hearing on SB-451,  
An Act Concerning Government Administration, State Contracting, Regional School Boards and  
the State Elections Enforcement Commission**

**Date: March 17, 2014**

Good afternoon Senator Musto, Representative Jutila, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Kirk Springsted and I am the Vice President for the Connecticut Community Providers Association (CCPA). CCPA represents community-based organizations that provide health and human services for children, adults, and families in multiple areas, including those that provide services and supports for individuals with disabilities. Our members serve more than 500,000 people each year.

I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 451, An Act Concerning Government Administration, State Contracting, Regional School Boards and the State Elections Enforcement Commission. This bill expands upon a 2013 bill, SB 761 (PA 13-227), which made permanent a program promoting employment for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages with commercial sector janitorial contractors. SB 451 expands the program to other types of contracted services, thereby providing additional potential employment opportunities to individuals with disabilities and economic disadvantages, something sorely needed in our state.

In 2011, the rate of unemployment for people with disabilities in Connecticut was 62%. The national unemployment rate for people with disabilities is even higher, roughly 75%. No sub-population of our society eligible to work has such appalling unemployment statistics. When people with disabilities do not have jobs, like anyone else, their economic well-being suffers dramatically, as does their ability to integrate into the community and lead successful lives.

In 1977, the Connecticut legislature took a step that began its national leadership in this arena. It created a preferred purchasing program (PA 77-405; CGS 17b-656), which promotes employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities through government contracting. Community providers work with individuals with disabilities to provide state agencies with needed products and services. The program has produced employment, employment training, work hours, and wages for individuals with disabilities in a variety of work settings.

In 2006, the Connecticut legislature expanded this program by creating the Qualified Partnership Pilot Program (PA 06-129; CGS 4a-82). This established a pilot program promoting employment for people with

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disabilities and economic disadvantages with commercial sector janitorial contractors. The Qualified Partnership Program was made permanent by the passage of SB 761 (PA 13-227) during the 2013 legislative session, as the legislature took another step toward creating standard wage opportunities for people with disabilities and economic disadvantages.

SB 451 will expand Connecticut's current program to other types of contracted services, including but not limited to, laundry services, mail supply room staffing, data entry, and telephone call center staffing. There is no downside to this. With this bill, we will benefit our state and citizens, and we will continue and expand upon our example for the entire country. People with disabilities can work. They want to work. They are equal members of our society. Thankfully the country is beginning to move in this direction, as is the federal government. People with disabilities deserve all the benefits of work we all enjoy.

The bill before you now is just the latest step our state has taken as a national leader in promoting employment opportunities for people with disabilities. According to the State Use Programs Association (SUPRA) 2012 Economic Benefits Study, Connecticut saves over \$2,000 per worker employed through the preferred purchasing program as a result of reductions in income support programs and increased tax revenues. On an annual basis, Connecticut saves \$800,000 through this program. SB 451 will increase these savings to the state. And in addition to personal income, it will bring immeasurable benefits to people with disabilities who will find purpose, meaning, friendship, self sufficiency, and community integration through their work – something to which we are all entitled.

We thank the committee for supporting this critical legislation. And I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of it. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have or provide any additional information. Please feel free to contact me at 860-257-7909 or [kspringsted@ccpa-inc.org](mailto:kspringsted@ccpa-inc.org).