

Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:

H.B. No. 6824: An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017,

And Making Appropriations Therefor And Other Provisions Related To Revenue.

Submitted By: Johanna Oppel, CE Manager, The Kennedy Center

March 6, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Johanna Oppel. I am a manager of a Community Experience Program at The Kennedy Center. In our program, we support young adults who have intellectual disabilities and high care support/ medical needs.

We are among the 500+ member agencies of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits (CT Nonprofits.)

I would like to share my concerns with H.B. 6824, An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2017, And Making Appropriations Therefor And Other Provisions Related To Revenue. In particular, I wanted to express my sincere concerns to the funding reductions in the Department of Developmental Services, funding for Day Supports for new graduates in June 2015. This funding reduction would threaten critical services to individuals and families in our service area.

Our program currently supports a young woman who is in her last year of high school transitioning to adult services. She lives at home with her single mother and her younger siblings. She requires total care with all activities of daily living, receives g-tube feedings for nutrition/hydration and requires close supervision due to her medical needs. These day supports are critical to her and her mother, as these supports allow her mom to work to support her and her siblings. In June when she graduates she will no longer have the critical supports necessary for her care.

The proposed cuts, coupled with four rounds of rescissions/budget modification dating back to late 2012, have put enormous pressure onto an already severely depleted system. The reality is that nonprofit providers have been pushed to our breaking point due to the lack of investment over the past two decades. Chronic underfunding has already forced many nonprofits to close, compete against one another for scarce resources, layoff employees, reduce benefit packages; altogether

creating a win or lose system that weakens the entire nonprofit sector and threatens its sustainability.

As members of the Appropriations Committee work toward creating your 'Recommended Budget' for SFY16 and 17, I urge you to restore these harmful cuts to ensure critical programs and services are available to the residents of Connecticut. I'd also like to respectfully remind you that investing in the nonprofit sector will improve service delivery, increase economic activity, and save taxpayer money; a "win-win" for policymakers working to strengthen the economy, the nonprofit workforce trying to make ends meet, and most importantly, the clients and their families who count on efficient, cost-effective, and high-quality services in our communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, or for additional information.

Johanna Oppel, The Kennedy Center
3 Willow Lane Naugatuck CT 06770
Joppel036@gmail.com