CONNECTICUT COUNCIL OF
FAMILY SERVICE
AGENCIES

Strengthening Connecticut's Families

February 10, 2015

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING
H.B. 6465 – An Act Concerning Purchase of Service Contracts
Testimony from Alyssa Goduti, CT Council of Family Service Agencies

Good afternoon. I am Alyssa Goduti, the President and CEO of the Connecticut Council of Family Service Agencies, a statewide network of independent, nonprofit, family service agencies that deliver services to over 150,000 families annually from more than 100 sites located throughout Connecticut. Member agencies are community-based, licensed by the state of CT and nationally accredited. Family service agencies have been effectively serving Connecticut families and your communities for over 100 years. We support collaboration and innovation of public policies and programs that foster the well-being of children, families and adults; develop and provide services that allow people to more towards self-reliance; and advocate for systems that are relevant and responsive to Connecticut's diverse populations.

We fully support House Bill 6465, An Act Concerning Purchase of Service Contracts. Nonprofit health and human service providers support more than 500,000 people each year, approximately 15% of the state's population. In addition, these individuals are supported by a robust workforce, which makes up 12% of the population. Almost every citizen and every one of you and your constituents are touched by the services of a nonprofit agency. We all know friends, neighbors, or family members owho have faced a mental health issues, needed support while going through a divorce, or struggled economically after losing a job. To understand the value of this system to the health of our communities, I'd like to highlight some real but startling statistics:

- By 2020, behavioral health disorders will surpass all physical diseases world-wide as major cause of disability.
- Mood disorders rank 1st in work loss costs; & are the most common reason for going on social security disability
- On average, people with serious mental illness have a lifespan that is shortened by 25 years.

We are all touched by this system and we all benefit from having a strong safety. For decades, community based providers have collaborated with the state to ensure that critical services are provided to children and adults in a manner that is accessible and affordable, yet maintains the highest standards of quality. In difficult fiscal times, demand for our services grows. While the costs of doing business for us, like any other business, go up every year, support from the state has not. Prior to receiving a 1% COLA in FY2013, we received no COLA for the previous 4 years, while costs of providing services have increased significantly.

Community providers have been under funded for more than 20 years. By every objective measure, budget increases to help our clients have failed to keep pace with inflation. It's not even close. While the Consumer Price Index has risen by nearly 95% in the last twenty years, cost of service increases for private providers have only gone up by about 33%. This disparity is placing increasing strain on our budgets and ultimately our clients – your constituents.

This situation is somewhat ironic because we help save precious state resources every day. We are a smart investment for the state, helping to strengthen Connecticut's economy not only by employing a strong workforce, but also by assisting some of the state's neediest residents achieve self-sufficiency so that they can become and/or remain productive, taxpaying residents. We keep people healthy, employed and productive! We support the young adult with developmental disabilities through day programs so that both of his parents may continue to work. We provide early childhood programs so that parents don't have to give up their dreams of a career because of costly childcare. We are the first line of support so that the adult dealing with depression doesn't end up in an emergency room but can instead get the help he needs to keep working and playing an active role in his family. The innovative, efficient and effective programs offered by nonprofit human service organizations are vital to the financial health of the state and to long-term economic well-being.

It is imperative that the safety net of community-based services is preserved and strengthened so that we can meet growing needs, provide ready access to care and work to breakdown stigma that keeps people from seeking help. We urge you to support HB 6465, which looks at what it truly costs to fund the essential services in your community. The "Safety Net" is part of the fabric of healthy, safe communities and needs to be strengthened.

Thank you for your time and attention.