

**Testimony of Fran Torres, Executive Administrative Assistant, Horizons,
Incorporated, South Windham, Connecticut to the Appropriations
Committee**

**An Act Concerning the Governor's Proposed FY 2016-2017 Biennial Budget
March 6, 2015**

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and honorable members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Fran Torres and I am an Executive Administrative Assistant at Horizons -- a private nonprofit agency located in South Windham. Our agency has been in operation for 36 years and provides individualized supports and services for people with special needs where they live, learn, work, and play. Horizons is a member of the Connecticut Association of Nonprofits.

I speak before you in opposition to 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,”** specific to the DDS budget.

I am not a direct care worker but, through my work in the office, I have been fortunate to engage directly with the people we support who have special needs and to witness the incredible strides that are made with positive programming as exemplified by our agency. I have also witnessed the incredible dedication of our staff towards this end. I was shocked to hear about the planned cuts in the Governor’s Budget for Employment and Day Services, Residential Services, etc. These proposed budget cuts will have a devastating effect on the lives of people we support who have special needs and their families who rely heavily on nonprofit services and are already overburdened psychologically and financially.

Our agency has been instrumental in supporting people with special needs to advocate for themselves. However, many cannot do this and so their voices are not heard and they are, thus, invisible to the rest of the world and evidently to the State of Connecticut. I know the Governor has visited our campus and is well aware of the remarkable work done here. I am sure he is aware of the importance of the work done by nonprofits throughout the State.

I can understand that budget cuts are needed. *What I cannot understand is why these cuts are falling so heavily on the nonprofit sector!!*

I ask this Committee, the Connecticut General Assembly, and Governor Malloy to discard the proposed cuts to DDS’ budget. These proposed cuts threaten the economic security of those who work so hard for people with developmental disabilities and would diminish private providers’ ability to retain well-trained staff.

I hope the Appropriations Committee considers my testimony when drafting their budget and when negotiating with OPM and the governor about proposed budget cuts. I implore you to consider distributing the budget cuts in a more equitable way so the nonprofit sector is not held responsible for bearing such a heavy burden!

Thank you.