

The Kennedy Center, Inc.

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March 3, 2015

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: Peggy Ordway, Children's Services Director, The Kennedy Center, Inc.

Friday, February 27, 2015 (DCF)

Tuesday, March 3, 2015 (OEC)

Friday, March 6, 2015 (DDS, DPH)

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Peggy Ordway. I am Children's Services Director at The Kennedy Center, Inc., which has been providing services to people with disabilities from birth to end-of-life since 1951. The Children's Division provides Birth to Three Services, clinical therapeutic afterschool services, behavioral services, social activity groups, community recreational services, in-home parent education using an evidence-based curriculum, and respite services for children birth to 21. 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 DCF, OEC, DDS, and DPH funding. This funding reduction would threaten critical services to individuals and families in our service area.

Our clinical therapeutic afterschool program provides children with a safe place to go after school to learn social skills, anger management, and conflict resolution. The children who attend this program often have aggressive behaviors and are turned away by other providers. Without funding from DCF and DDS, we will be unable to serve these children, who pose a threat to themselves and others if left to fend for themselves without learning and implementing the coping skills our program teaches.

Our Birth to Three program has been struggling for years to at least break even financially. We go into homes to support newly-diagnosed children with mental, physical, speech, and other challenges and we prepare them to successfully transition into a typical preschool or nursery school. Without our interventions, these children will remain medical burdens to their families and cost the State more money in the long run.

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, lay off 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.

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