

I am writing in regard to the March 2015 Appropriations Committee review of H.B. No. 6824

Senator Bye, Representative Walker & distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Richard Peksa. I am the Supervisor of Behavioral & Community Programs for The Kennedy Center, Inc. I have had the privilege of working for The Kennedy Center for more than 20 years. The Kennedy Center is among 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 13<sup>th</sup> 2017, And Making Appropriations Therefor And Other Provisions Related To Revenue. In particular, I wanted to express my profound concerns to the funding reductions in the Department of Developmental Services. This funding reduction will threaten critical services to individuals and families throughout the state and in The Kennedy Center's immediate service area. The Kennedy Center currently operates programs and provides services in two DDS regions.

The Kennedy Center has long been an exemplary organization providing a wide range of supports to children – adults – seniors with a variety of developmental disabilities. Since our founding in 1951 our innovative programs and services have been nationally recognized on many occasions and our founder; Mrs. Evelyn Kennedy, was the initial recipient of the “Connecticut’s Treasure” award. The Kennedy Center has consistently received the highest level of accreditation from the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), resulting in recognition from multiple Governors.

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 grim reality is that nonprofit providers have been pushed to our breaking point due to the lack of investment over the past two decades. Chronic, repeated 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 further 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 would also like to respectfully remind you that investing in the nonprofit sector will improve service delivery, increase economic activity, and save taxpayer money; a clear “win-win” for policy makers 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. My contact information is listed in my signature below.

Richard Peksa; BCaBA  
Supervisor of Behavioral & Community Programs

The Kennedy Center, Inc.  
39 Lindeman Drive  
Trumbull, CT 06611  
(203) 332-4535 X 285