

Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:

H. B. No. 6824: An Act Concerning The State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2017, and Making Appropriations Therefor and Other Provisions Related to Revenue.

Submitted By: Veronica Whitlock, mother of an Autistic Adult

Friday, March 6, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, may name is Veronica Whitlock, a mother of an Autistic Adult.

I would like to share my concerns with H. B. 6824, An Act Concerning The State Budget for The Biennium Ending June 30th, 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 DDS which funds the Kennedy Center where my son, Alex Laughlin, goes five days a week.

DDS helps provide round the clock staff who care for my severely Autistic Son and they provide support to the Kennedy Center where my son goes five days a week for a day program. Alex, because of his aggression and erratic behavior, used to have 1:1 staff. Because of cuts, he now has to share a staff member with other adults which has led to some severe, dangerous outbursts. Alex relies on the staff to learn new things and provide for his safety during the weekday. DDS benefits handicapped people like my son who have no place to go but the day program as most do not have the skills to work or be part of society in any other way.

The proposed cuts, coupled with four rounds of rescissions/budget modifications dating back to 2012, have put enormous pressure onto an already severely depleted system. The reality is that nonprofit providers have been pushed to their breaking point due to the lack of investment over the past two decades. Chronic underfunding has already forced many nonprofits to close, compete against each other 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 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 "win-win" for policymakers working to strengthen the economy, the nonprofit workforce trying to make ends meet, and most importantly, the clients and our families who count on efficient, cost-effective, and high-quality services in our community.

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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