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"For people with intellectual, developmental and other life-affecting disabilities."

Testimony submitted to the Appropriations Committee

H.B. No. 5044: An Act Making Adjustments To State Expenditures For The Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017.

Submitted By: Susan M. Desrosiers, Executive Director, The Arc of Quinebaug Valley, Inc.

February 18, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Susan Desrosiers. I am the Executive Director of The Arc of Quinebaug Valley, Inc. Our agency provides Day, Residential, Education, Supported Employment and Transportation Services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are among the 550+ member agencies of the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance.

I would like to share my concerns with House Bill 5044: An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017. In particular, I wanted to express my sincere concerns to the funding reductions to the Department of Developmental Services. These funding reductions will threaten critical services to the individuals and families in our service area which includes 13 towns in the northeastern part of the state. Our agency operates in the poorest county in CT and has a large number of families in need of services and supports. The Arc employs 150 individuals who support the businesses in this community. Due to the chronic underfunding to nonprofit providers, our employees pay rates continue to be below the livable wage in Connecticut forcing most employees to work two and three jobs to make ends meet. In addition, we provide services and supports to over 100 individuals ranging in age from 15 to over 80 years old. Our services and supports include Day Programs, Supported Employment and Residential Services that range from a few hours per week of supports up to 24/7 group homes.

The Nonprofit Community Providers of CT deliver the state's core services, yet continue to be forced to operate on limited funding due to repeated rescissions and chronic underfunding. The individuals served by the community nonprofits are some of the state's neediest citizens. They are our neighbors, friends, parents and children. They strive every day to increase or regain their independence.

Our agency particularly works with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They are looking for a hand up – not a hand out. The Governor's rescissions will severely impact their ability to continue to strive for independence. The cut to the line item for Employment Opportunities and Day Programs severely impacts not only the individuals themselves but also family members many of whom have jobs that will be affected if their loved ones are not in an employment or day program and must remain home. Graduates transitioning from school to work programs will be forced to remain at home with the impact of regressing in many of the skills that they have been working on at school. Working families will be forced to give up their jobs and accept state benefits in order to be home to supervise loved ones who cannot be left alone.

The Governor has also recommended a transfer of Residential funding to DSS with a change to fee for service billing. While this proposal has the potential to create positive change in the provision of

services to the individuals whom we support, it is imperative that the legislature consider that without adequate rates, the waiting list cannot be addressed. The current funding is not adequate to address the chronic underfunding of the nonprofit providers and the waiting list. In order for the state to convert Public Group Homes to the Private Sector, as presented in the current budget, the rate system MUST be addressed for services to effectively be delivered.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any additional questions please do not hesitate to contact me: Susan Desrosiers, Executive Director, The Arc of Quinebaug Valley, Inc., 687 Cook Hill Rd., Danielson, CT 06239 860-774-2827 sdesrosiers@qvarc.org www.qvarc.org