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: Heide Perham, Director of Marketing and Communication, Ädelbrook

Thursday, February 18, 2016

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and other distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, I am Heide Perham, the Director of Marketing and Communications at Ädelbrook. Ädelbrook is among the 550 plus member agencies of CT Community Nonprofit alliance. I am writing to share my concerns regarding House Bill 5044: An Act Making Adjustments to State Expenditures for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2017. In particular, to cuts close to $56 million to the CT Department of Developmental Services, as well as changes to the provision of Developmental Services. As you probably know, Ädelbrook is a multi-service agency specializing in behavioral and developmental services. We provide short-term, long-term and respite residential programming for children and young adults with ID/DD and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Our in-home and community-based services are customized from as little as two hours a week to round the clock staffing. Additionally we provide an educational continuum for students aged 3 - 21.

The population we and many others serve, are often faced with educational, social, behavioral and medical challenges and frequently require twenty-four hour one-to-one support. Cutting the Department of Developmental Services budget will gravely impact the services these individuals and their families desperately need. To cut funding puts all of the gains that have been made up to this point at risk. We have a young man in our care who self-soothed by rubbing his own flesh to the point of rubbing it to the cartilage, resulting in Emergency Room visits and recurring infections. Because of the services he receives at Ädelbrook, he no longer exhibits this behavior. He is currently in a Continuous Residential Support Home and continues to do well and has regular visits with his family. Cuts to the DDS budget put him and so many others just like him at risk of more ER visits and more costly interventions, not to mention added strain on him and his family.

I have worked in the nonprofit sector for over 20 years, and I know that the nonprofits deliver the state's core services, yet we are often forced to operate on limited funding the result of repeated rescissions and chronic underfunding…This cannot continue.

We must make sure that, as a state, we are best allocating our services to take care of those most in need. To make any cuts to the Department of Developmental services when the wait list is so long and the numbers of individuals being diagnosed with autism continues to grow, seems counterproductive. While the shift of services to the Department of Social Services has some benefits, the budget represents a 1:1 transfer between DDS and DSS. Under the current system,

there is not adequate funding to address either the drastic underpayment to all providers or the waiting list. A transfer of money does not solve either problem.

I am proud of the work that is done at Ädelbrook; I hope to be proud of my state by recognizing these kinds of services cannot be cut without detrimental consequences to those who need us most.

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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