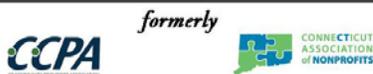


# CT COMMUNITY NONPROFIT ALLIANCE

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To: Members of the Appropriations Committee

From: Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance

Re: Appropriations Committee Public Hearing on H.B. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDATURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017 – DOC & JUD Budgets

Date: February 19, 2016

Good evening distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist at CT Community Nonprofit Alliance. The CT Nonprofit Alliance represents more than 550 nonprofit organizations and associations across the state and is the largest advocacy organization representing community nonprofits in Connecticut. Together, our members serve more than 500,000 Connecticut residents each year.

I am here today to voice concerns about the Governor's 2017 Midterm Budget.

**The proposed budget threatens the health and well-being of Connecticut residents by cutting spending in every area in which nonprofits serve our communities. In total, the Governor has proposed cutting vital programs and services by over \$408 million. Put another way, 72% of the total cuts proposed by the Governor will fall on state agencies that support -and partner with - community nonprofits.**

The following testimony is presented on behalf of the Community Justice and Juvenile Justice Division of CT Nonprofit Alliance who contract with DOC and/or CSSD– and the thousands of individuals and families impacted by their programmatic contributions to the state.

CT Nonprofit Alliance stands in strong opposition to the proposed reductions to the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch. The total cuts proposed to the DOC Budget are \$68 million. The total cuts proposed to the Judicial Branch are \$70 million.

For years, nonprofit providers have come before you and testified in favor of expanding treatment programs and alternatives to incarceration. Support and expansion of Reentry Programs have historically served as an extensive cost savings measure, which not only increases public safety, but strengthens the very fabric of our communities. As you continue your efforts to address the state budget crisis, it is essential to view the support of community-based, reentry services (as provided by the nonprofit provider network) not as an 'expense,' but rather, an 'investment' in social justice, human capital and the welfare of our state.

Governor Malloy is to be commended for his vision with regard to the proposed 'Second Chance Society 2.0.' The initiative includes proposed adjustments in many areas of the Department of Correction Budget, with essential focus on expansion of the Second Chance Society initiative, as well as services affecting those involved in the Juvenile Justice System. These changes are focused on young offenders, but also include bail reforms which would impact the prison population in FY 2017.

These initiatives are designed to continue the progress being made in reducing the state's dropping crime rate, (which, in 2015, was at a 48-year low), as well as ensuring nonviolent offenders are successfully reintegrated into society and become productive and fulfilled members of their communities and contribute to Connecticut's economy. They will help to break the cycle of crime and poverty that impacts all too many families and

communities. National, bipartisan consensus is building in support of a Second Chance Society in states across the country, including Texas, Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama. Connecticut continues as national model of excellence in the Criminal Justice field - most recently profiled in a powerful New York Times Editorial: [Connecticut's Second Chance Society](#) (1.04.16)

Nonprofit Community Justice Providers welcome the call for accountability that has been a constant 'theme' in the Governor's Budget. This sector in particular, has a long-standing record of providing data related to the impact on the State of their remarkable programs. The Contractor Data Collection System (CDCS) is a web based data system developed by CSSD to collect client-level data about services delivered by its network of contracted community providers. The CSSD system of accountability and analysis is second to none, and considered to be the 'gold standard' both within the State of CT, and on a national basis. With that said, you need look no further than these statistics to understand how incredibly counter-productive any cuts to these services would be.

On behalf of the nonprofit provider reentry community, CT Nonprofit Alliance urges your continued support of the Second Chance Society Initiatives. With that said: It is critical to acknowledge that the state's ability to effectively achieve any of the goals set forth is directly related to the strength and viability of the Nonprofit Provider network of Community Justice Services. Providers are true 'partners' in the success that the state has experienced in the criminal justice arena, which has positioned the accomplishments of the state on the national stage. Unfortunately, the state budget has not reflected the true cost of providing these essential and critically acclaimed services. The cost of living adjustments (COLAs) reflected in the state budgets average less than .05% over the past twenty five years. This is a trend that simply cannot continue if the state is to realize the significant goals set forth.

The provider network has a long standing and increasingly collaborative relationship with both the Department of Correction (DOC) and the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch. We are extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to work in partnership with Commissioner Semple, (DOC) and Executive Director Grant (CSSD) – and their respective administrations. Each leader provides a unique vision for the future of reentry services within their purview. The success within both State entities is reflected in the data that places CT at the forefront on the national stage.

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In closing, I urge you to consider the following recommendations, to maintain and build upon the achievements of the nonprofit, Community Justice and Juvenile Justice Provider network of services:

1. Restore funding lost through both the proposed cuts and annualized rescissions.
2. Implement Nationally Recognized 'Justice Reinvestment' Practices: As the state continues the nationally recognized trend of declining crime and prison admissions/ closing prisons, it is critical to reinvest the cost savings (FY 2017 cost savings of -14.8 million) in the very programs which will ensure future and sustainable progress – the nonprofit provider network of reentry services.
3. Reinstate the previously dedicated line items within the DOC and CSSD Budgets which are slated to be consolidated under a single 'Agency Operations' line within their respective state agencies. While the rationale for such a transition is unclear, it is extremely clear that the sector will lose the extremely necessary prioritization the sector deserves under the previous system of designated line items.
4. Provide adequate funding that reflects the true cost of services and addresses the chronic under-funding of the Nonprofit Provider Network (current Cost of Living Adjustments average less than .05% over twenty years.)
5. Protect Provider Allocations within Agency Operating Funds: In order to ensure budget growth is aligned with available resources, across-the board reductions of 5.75 percent are proposed for Agency Operations accounts. Agencies will 'focus their limited resources on core services' (DOC = -37,984,565. CSSD = -30,935,354.) Once again – Community nonprofits are the source for these critical, core services! Please Note:

All programs within the Agency Operations account are potentially subject to this cut, although there is no guarantee that the 5.75% cut will be evenly distributed.

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**Connecticut's community nonprofits deliver the state's core services**, yet they are forced to operate on limited funding, the result of repeated rescissions and chronic underfunding. Doing more with less is not an option.

The individuals served by community nonprofits are some of the state's most vulnerable citizens, and in many instances, those who strive every day to increase or regain their independence. **The services they receive are life sustaining.** They are our children and parents, our neighbors and friends. Without community services, they will have no place to go to meet their needs, or they may be forced to more costly alternatives, such as emergency departments, hospitals—and, yes – the Criminal Justice System.

In the past, the legislature has proven that it takes the needs and well-being of Connecticut residents seriously. **Please continue to support community nonprofits and the hundreds of thousands of individuals, children and families they serve across Connecticut.**

I thank you for your time and consideration of these critically important issues. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time, with questions, or for additional information:

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