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Testimony before the Government Administration and Elections Regarding Governor's Bill No. 5049, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations for General Government

February 22, 2016

Senator Cassano, Representative Jutila, Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

I am Stan Soby, Vice President for Public Policy and External Affairs, at the Connecticut Institute for the Blind, known as Oak Hill, a recognized leader in providing community-based programs over the lifespan: housing, employment training, education, assistive technology, healthy relationships, early intervention, and recreation to children and adults with multiple disabilities (including visual impairments). Oak Hill employs over 1,300 professionals who work at our 115 program sites located in 55 towns throughout Connecticut.

One of our 16 distinct programs which continue to evolve to successfully meet the changing needs of thousands of people with disabilities each year is the Oak Hill School, a private special education school licensed by the Connecticut State Department of Education, servicing students from 3-21 years of age with moderate to severe disabilities including autism, emotional disabilities, behavioral challenges, medical fragility and multiple disabilities. Oak Hill School currently serves over 110 students in highly individualized, structured, innovative community-based programs that focus on development in academic, independent living, social, vocational and community skills through motivating and meaningful activities.

We join with the Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities (CAPSEF) in requesting your consideration of the following points regarding Bill 5049 – the Medicaid mandate in Sections 2 & 3. We understand having school districts or programs serving schools participate in the Medicaid program to maximize Federal match revenue is a necessary component of balancing the State's budget.

1. We request the opportunity to work with DSS to develop a formula to cover the administrative costs of the program. Two specific areas of concern:
 - a. Time: The staff's direct time, the administrative time, the time needed for reports, forms and data collection; the time to train staff, and the time required to set up or change a system;
 - b. Technology: Hardware, software, and security requirements and costs. Oak Hill currently employs electronic records. Compatibility and ease of uploading information is critical.
2. A uniform system and standardized process is needed statewide to insure cost effectiveness and efficiency, as Oak Hill, and other schools like us, serves students from a number of districts;
3. All programs need a clear understanding of the liability for those who provide services to public schools;

4. Clear guidelines are needed to insure proper procedures are followed under both FERPA and HIPPA (concerns include data privacy, confidentiality, access, educational records and medical records, especially when stored electronically);
5. We want to work with DSS to develop a process to be able to bill for the integrated services model utilized by Oak Hill and other schools;
6. We ask that you implement based on the July, 2017 timeline as described in Section 2 of the bill, and reflect that date throughout.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today.