

# CT COMMUNITY NONPROFIT ALLIANCE

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To: Members of the Committee on Children

From: Brunilda Ferraj, Senior Public Policy Specialist, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance

Re: Committee on Children Public Hearing on H.B. No. 5135: AN ACT CONCERNING THE CLOSURE OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE TRAINING SCHOOL AND THE PUEBLO UNIT FOR GIRLS.

Date: February 23, 2016

Good morning Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and distinguished members of the Committee on Children:

I am Brunilda Ferraj, Senior Public Policy Specialist for CT Community Nonprofit Alliance. The CT Nonprofit Alliance represents more than 550 community nonprofit organizations and associations across the state and is the largest advocacy organization representing community nonprofits in Connecticut. Our members serve more than 500,000 Connecticut residents each year.

I am here to comment on HB 5135, which requires the closure of CJTS and the Pueblo Unit for girls by January 1, 2017. We support the planned and thoughtful closure of CJTS and Pueblo Unit and the reinvestment of savings into alternative, cost effective community-based services and supports.

It is well known that Connecticut's commitment to reforming its juvenile justice system has resulted in enormous progress, and CT is now considered a national leader. This progress must continue.

**If adequately funded, nonprofits can care for the youth served at CJTS & Pueblo Unit and stand willing and equipped to help them thrive in the community.**

In every area, from mental health to substance use disorders, developmental disabilities to child and family health and well-being, Connecticut community nonprofits are key to the delivery of cost-effective, high quality services. Connecticut's network of skilled and experienced mental health professionals work in community settings, building relationships and providing services in accordance with best practices and evidence-based programs designed to meet the multiple and diverse needs of youth. Through the delivery of wraparound services and individualized programming, nonprofits provide youth with the opportunity to succeed within their own communities.

Yet programs to care for those in need of mental health and substance abuse services have been flat funded or suffered funding reductions for years. Chronic underfunding, exacerbated by deficit mitigation cuts, budget rescissions, reductions and reduced allotments jeopardizes the progress that CT has made to the juvenile justice system. National and in-state experts agree that community-based services are often the best option for youth in need, yielding both therapeutic benefits to the individual and financial benefits to the state. If CJTS and Pueblo Unit were to close, we respectfully recommend that you prioritize the reinvestment of savings to adequately provide support to youth in the community.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

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