DATE: February 27, 2019

TO: Government Administration and Elections Committee

FROM: Sherry Albert, Chief Operating Officer, Community Solutions, Inc.

RE: S. B.917 An Act Concerning the State Contracting Standards Board and Requirements for Privatization Contracts.

Good morning Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, Senator Sampson, Representative France and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

My name is Sherry Albert, Chief Operating Officer for Community Solutions, Inc. (CSI). We have been a contracted provider for 56 years and have received funding from numerous state agencies over the years. Most predominately we have worked with the Department of Corrections and the Court Support Services Division.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify in opposition to S.B. 917 An Act Concerning the State Contracting Standards Board and Requirements for Privatization Contracts. This bill will stop the conversion of services from the state to high-quality, more cost-effective nonprofits. The contracting process is already cumbersome enough without adding additional layers. More layers will only cost more time and money in a point in the state’s history where there is none. Furthermore, there is no value added in this bill. The RFP process and subsequent contracting processes follow strict guidelines. Potential RFP’s that result in contracting are reviewed by attorney’s before they go out to ensure fair practice and compliance with the law. That is value-added because high standards and Best Practices are followed the first time. This bill would be duplicative and therefore a shear waste of valuable resources.

The bill will cost more money than is necessary to provide services which means fewer people get the service or get reduced services. The folks non-profits serve are the neediest. Given level funding (which is really a cut) for years with occasional COLA’s, inflation has far outpaced the needs of the nonprofits and those we serve. Under this bill even more money would be diverted away from the most vulnerable and most likely would disproportionately impact people of color.

Non-Profits such as CSI, save the state hundreds of thousands of dollars. For example, according the Connecticut Post article from April 28, 2016 the average cost of a prison bed was $50,262. Nearly three years later the cost has increased, not gone down. Within the same timeframe, we have served higher need clients (mental health, higher medical need, Opioid addicted etc.) while keeping the costs level averaging 28k per bed. That is roughly a savings of 50%. Why reinvest that savings in redundant processes? If the concern is accountability, consider the RFP process noted above and the regular and rather frequent auditing that occurs by State agencies and independent external auditors which non-profits use. There is substantial oversight already.

Connecticut has been nationally recognized as a leader in criminal justice reforms. The outcomes that have repeatedly been shared with the legislature continue to show outstanding results. The systems in place are comprehensive and protective of the state. In fact, a leaner process would be welcome and should be considered vs. this more cumbersome process.

Ultimately, we ask that you acknowledge the exceptional work of the non-profit sector by preserving and expanding the use of community services, effectively using limited dollars to provide quality care to those in need.