March 1, 2019
David Labier, DDS,
Direct Care Worker
Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is David LaBier. I live in Southington and have worked at the same public sector DDS group home for the past 18 years. Before that, I worked with a private sector day program. I am here tonight to urge you to fund these vital services for Connecticut residents.

I am lucky enough to have worked in both the public and private sector of the I/DD industry and can talk about the extensive training that state employees go through to be able to provide quality care. For example, we have to go through a required Physical Management Training (PMT), which is a 21 hour training included in the 1199NE collective bargaining agreement. The PMT training covers how to deescalate situations, prevent violence, and handle violent behavior in a way that keeps individuals’ safe. These types of trainings and the continuous training that we have to receive, enable us to provide quality to care to the remaining clients that receive public care. Many of my co-workers have been providing this care for many years. This is a profession for us, and we love the work we do.

Many workers at private sector group homes do the same kinds of work for much less money and little to no benefits. That is not right. We cannot continue to talk about converting public group homes like mine to private sector providers if we are not willing to discuss things like how workers are paid and the benefits that are provided in conjunction with the care that they receive. We cannot continue to force workers and the people receiving important care to fight over scraps.

Connecticut residents deserve to have fully funded services across all sectors and NOT at the expense of the worker who is delivering the care. Care matters. Residents deserve dignity and humanity, and workers deserve to not have to worry about how to take care of their own family when they go home at night.