Re: H.B. 7148 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2021, and Making Appropriations

February 28, 2019

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to urge you to support funding for essential community services in H.B. 7148 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June Thirtieth, 2021, and Making Appropriations. Community nonprofits improve our quality of life, making Connecticut a better place to live and work.

The Farrell treatment Center provides substance abuse treatment to many low income individuals on Medicaid for whom treatment would otherwise be unavailable. Substance abuse recovery benefits the entire community by improving quality of life, reducing crime, reducing domestic violence, reducing the need for DCF to be involved in the home and by saving lives.

Year-after-year of state budget difficulties have put increasing pressure our community nonprofit. It grows increasingly difficult to provide quality care given the static rate of reimbursement and reductions in support to nonprofit organizations due to DMHAS budget cuts. These cuts are short term savings that result in long term costs in the hospital system, the judicial branch and increased costs of incarceration. We appreciate that in the face of another difficult budget year Governor lamont has sought to limit the budget impact on people served by my, and other nonprofits.

But after so many years of difficult budgets, there is more to do and we are here to ask you to build upon the Governor’s proposals. As you know, more than half of the state budget comprises “fixed costs” which are not subject to cuts. That percentage grows each year, and we appreciate the Governor’s tackling those costs.

But funding for nonprofits is in whatever remains. The combination of ongoing budget shortfalls and growing fixed costs mean community nonprofits are a shrinking piece of a diminishing pie. Nonprofits are dependent on the State for funding and have limited options in the face of budget shortfalls. We can’t raise taxes or charges. This is a model that cannot sustain itself — and it puts Connecticut’s quality-of-life at risk.

You can maximize limited state funding by shifting more expensive state-operated programs into the community. The State must decide: either keep the expensive status quo and serve fewer people or change the system and serve more people in need. Community nonprofits can reduce state costs and meet the demand for services if you first take the necessary steps.

Steve Projansky, MS
Outpatient Therapist
Farrell Treatment Center