March 5, 2019

Dear Sen. Osten, Rep. Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify about the importance of CRIS Radio and urge you to reinstate $60,000 to CRIS Radio, a line item in the Dept. of Rehabilitation Services’ budget. We understand that we must share in the cuts due to the budget deficit, but a 76% reduction in state funding is not sustainable since 2014. It has resulted in pay cuts, layoffs, and reduction in some of our programming.

CRIS Radio is a God-send to many of the people and their families we serve in Connecticut by keeping people who are unable to read informed about a host of subjects, including grocery store sales flyers to classroom assignments.

Consider our CRISKids for Schools program, providing more than 1,300 audio versions of classroom print materials for children with reading disabilities at 100 schools. Teachers tell us that after using CRISKids, students raise their hands for the first time, now able to participate in classroom discussions. We know that reading proficiently by grade 3 is a predictor of graduating from high school. CRISKids is a low-cost tool that helps schools and the state help students learn how to read.

In addition, consider the following:

- CRIS makes its service available to more than 85,000 people in the state, including DOR’s 10,000 BESB consumers;
- CRIS makes our service available at 117 nursing homes and assisted living facilities; and
- CRIS streams its English and Spanish programming to more than 31,000 hospital inpatients – which will soon grow to 44,000 with two hospital partnerships.

The numbers tell only part of the story. The real value of CRIS is how we improve the quality of life for the thousands of people we serve. We receive numerous letters about how we make the lives of people with disabilities better. Such is an example shared by Frank Marek’s family. (Letter is attached).

Please reinstate additional funding to the CRIS Radio line item in the DORS’ budget. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Diane Weaver Dunne
Executive Director

315 Windsor Avenue
Windsor, CT 06095
Phone: 860-527-8000  Fax: 860-727-9581  E-mail: info@crisradio.org
State Funding

FY 2019: $20,194  
FY 2018: $20,194  
FY 2017: $27,474  
FY 2016: $66,505  
FY 2015: $79,098  
FY 2014: $83,258  
FY 2013: $83,258  
FY 2012: $83,258

State funding has been reduced by 76% since 2014.