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Testimony Submitted to the Committee on Human Services:

HB 7093, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Submitted By: Stan Soby, Vice President, Public Policy and External Affairs

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Senator Moore, Senator Logan, Representative Abercrombie, Representative Case and distinguished members of the Committee on Human Services, I am Stan Soby, the Vice President, Public Policy and External Affairs for Oak Hill. Oak Hill has been providing services for 125 years and is a leader in providing the highest quality community-based programs; through education, assistive technology, programs and advocacy, we support people at every stage of life.

Oak Hill has over 20 distinct programs with some 150 program sites, classrooms, and homes located in 77 towns. Oak Hill employs over 1,700 professionals to help successfully meet the changing needs of close to 40,000 people with disabilities each year. In visiting the various programs and meeting with participants and staff, it is clear that Oak Hill does set the standard in providing education and lifelong learning opportunities to enhance independence and quality of life for people with disabilities. Oak Hill is among the 400+ member agencies of the Alliance, the Voice of Community Nonprofits.

Oak Hill believes that everyone should have the opportunity to experience the dignity of work. People with disabilities have been described by some as the most overlooked group of potential employees, given population demographics and workforce needs in a number of sectors in the economy. In looking just at the opportunities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), the recently released ANCOR Foundation/UCP 2019 Case for Inclusion (<http://caseforinclusion.org>), which is based on 2015 data, shows Connecticut third among the states at 46% in people with I/DD in supported or competitive employment. Washington is first at 85%; Oklahoma is second at 60%.

Some more challenging numbers are seen in the DDS Management Information Report (MIR) from December 2018 (https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DDS/mir/mir_December_2018_with_attachment.pdf?la=en). Of all people in the data set for Work and Day, 2/3 are adults receiving some form of day supports (66.27%). Of these, 4.17% are in Individual Supported Employment. 16.49% are in Group Supported Employment. 29.46% are in Day Support Options, which may include a work component along with the primary focus on community integration activities. 9.44% are in Individualized Day Supports, which could include micro-business options. The percentage of people in Competitive Employment is only 1.72%. This is not meant to be critical of the Department or of our private providers. It is meant to underscore just how necessary the task force proposed under HB 7093 is to gathering the resources, such as needed to create an employment pipeline for people with disabilities.

We think that HB 7093, AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO INCREASE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, now before the Committee on Human Services, is a significant opportunity to grow employment of people with disabilities so that they might fully participate in community life.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to the Committee.

Our Mission: Oak Hill sets the standard, partnering with people with disabilities, to provide services and solutions promoting independence, education, health and dignity.