

Testimony on HB 6636: An Act Concerning COVID-19 and Enhanced Federal Medicaid Funding  
Human Services Committee  
Thursday, March 25, 2021

Good afternoon Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case and other esteemed members of the Human Services Committee. My name is Win Evarts and I'm a resident of Norwalk and the Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, our state's oldest and largest advocacy organization dedicated to protecting the rights of individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities and promoting opportunities for their inclusion in the full life of their community.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 6636, An Act Concerning COVID-19 and Enhanced Federal Medicaid Funding.

The recently legislated American Rescue Plan is expected to bring \$10 billion of various additional federal support into Connecticut, much of it through increased federal matching funds connected to the Medicaid program. This federal largesse coincides with Connecticut's nonprofit community's request for \$461 million over five years to bring Connecticut's contracted supplier of many essential services back to even following many years of no contractual increase in the rates paid for the services rendered. Many of these services are Medicaid services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical need for higher Medicaid rates for Medicaid providers. Individuals in the I/DD community that access Medicaid Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) in the forms of Residential or Employment and Day supports are supported predominantly by private nonprofits (94% of Residential and 99% of Employment and Day). During the first year of the pandemic, staff turnover, staffing shortages, and significantly higher Employee Assistance Plan expenses were prevalent. The staff shortages currently being experienced by private providers may not permit those individuals supported by HCBS funding to return to their pre-pandemic programming. The importance of raising Medicaid rates to alleviate staff shortages must also be viewed in the context of the anticipated increases in the state's minimum wage.

We support HB 6636 because we believe that maximizing the near-term and long-term impact of this strong federal response to the COVID-19 pandemic is a key ingredient in stabilizing the essential workforce that delivers Medicaid services to those in need. Thank you for all that you do for all the people in Connecticut.

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