

March 25, 2021

Human Services Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2000
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: H.B. 6636, An Act Concerning COVID-19 and Enhanced Federal Medicaid Funding

Dear Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case and members of the Human Services Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of H.B. 6636, An Act Concerning COVID-19 and Enhanced Federal Medicaid Funding. My name is Steven Wolfe and I'm the Connecticut Executive Director for KenCrest, an agency that provides supports and services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) in Fairfield and New Haven Counties.

The recently enacted American Rescue Plan is expected to bring a significant increase in federal matching funds for Connecticut's Medicaid program. This includes a 10% increase for Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), as well as the continuation of the 6.2% increase that began last year. HCBS programs are funded by Medicaid, and support people with disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, and older adults to live in the community of their choice.

Congress dedicated this 10% increase specifically to HCBS programs to provide direct relief from the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Congress intended for states to use these funds to strengthen and expand HCBS supports and services, examples include, but are not limited to: assistive technology, increasing direct care worker payment rates, and workforce recruitment and retention.

The pandemic has severely impacted the I/DD community; individuals with I/DD and the Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) who support them are at increased risk of contracting and becoming severely ill or dying from COVID-19. Despite the risks, providers and DSPs have continued to provide community supports and services throughout the pandemic, and have served their communities faithfully.

The enhanced HCBS Medicaid funding will provide critical relief to community nonprofit providers at a time when there is a significant workforce shortage and increased costs to provide services. I urge you to support H.B. 6636 to provide relief to community nonprofit providers, people with disabilities and their families in Connecticut.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Sincerely,

Steven Wolfe
Executive Director, Connecticut
KenCrest