



February 17, 2022

RE: **HB 5307 Budget Investments**

Dear Honorable Legislative Representatives:

We are writing to you as constituents and nonprofit, municipal and community members asking for your leadership in addressing key issues that are necessary for our communities to recover and thrive. Throughout the State and particularly in Eastern Connecticut, we are emerging from the pandemic with record levels of mental health challenges for both children and adults. We must act now to stem an even larger problem as this crisis challenges our schools and employers. We urge you to take bold steps in this legislative session to bolster struggling nonprofits working tirelessly with a dearth of resources to address this crisis.

In order to invest funds wisely and with an eye towards addressing underlying problems, it is essential to fund workforce development and sustenance as well as existing and effective evidence-based programming. We ask that the legislature invest in:

- \$481 million in increased funding to make nonprofit service providers whole after years of budget neglect and to give them resources to continue to provide essential support for our residents.
- \$700 million to increase compensation and healthcare for the early childhood industry and to expand access to child care subsidies to more families.
- Increased support for existing, evidence-based programs for our neediest residents who need access now to outpatient and community services, while creating additional inpatient options for the future.
- Workforce development, including tuition reimbursement for all mental health workers -- at bachelor's level and above -- who staff vital community-based programs such as mobile crisis intervention.
- Support efforts to increase pay for critical workers in mental health and childcare settings to grow the workforce pool.

We need these investments now to keep our working families and all individuals struggling further to make ends meet, and to keep our children and elderly healthy and our communities in place. This is essential to keep Connecticut a competitive state so that businesses seek to establish offices here rather than flee the state. We cannot afford to continue to put band-aids on a broken system.

In addition to the immediate steps we have outlined, we ask for your leadership to move us towards transformational change that looks beyond this time of crisis to universal pre-school and childcare, equitable access to wholesome and complete health services and safe affordable housing for all our residents.

Respectfully yours,

David Addams, **William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund**
Allison Blake, **Child and Family Agency of Southeastern CT**
Tara Booker, **Norwich Human Services**
Emily Byrne, **Connecticut Voices for Children**
Gino DeMaio, **Sound Community Services**
Michelle Doucette Cunningham, **Connecticut After School Network**
Tricia Cunningham, **Always Home**
Ann Irr Dagle, **The Brian Dagle Foundation**
Maryam Elahi, **Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut**
Marvin Elbaum, **National Alliance on Mental Illness/Southeastern CT**
Angela Fournier, **Willimantic Human Services**
Lee-Ann Gomes, **Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut**
Jennifer Granger, **United Community & Family Services**
Shiela Hayes, **NAACP Norwich Branch**
Yvette Highsmith-Francis, **Community Health Center**
Kathleen Krider, **Access Community Action Agency**
Diane Manning, **United Services**

Patrick R. McCormack, **Uncas Health District**
Anne Miller, **TEEG**
Jeanne Milstein, **City of New London Human Services**
Regina Moller, **Noank Community Support Services**
Deborah Monahan, **TVCCA**
Victoria Nimirowski, **Windham Area Interfaith Ministry**
Margaret O'Shea, **Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut**
Susan Radway, **The Riverfront Children's Center**
Kimberly Armstrong Silcox, **Nonprofit Alliance of Northeastern CT**
Claire Silva, **Madonna Place**
Kathleen Stauffer, **The Arc Eastern Connecticut**
Katherine Verano, **Safe Futures**
Joan Wessell, **Senior Resources Agency on Aging**
Carol Williams, **Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut**
Janée Woods Weber, **Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund**
Catherine Zall, **New London Homeless Hospitality Center**
Joseph Zuzel, **Hartford HealthCare/Backus Hospital/Windham Hospital**