



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

March 13, 2025

Governor Ned Lamont

Office of the Governor
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney

State Capitol
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Speaker of the House Matt Ritter

State Capitol
300 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Governor Lamont, Senator Looney, and Speaker Ritter,

We write to you today to share the urgent concerns of The Arc of Southington and other organizations that provide essential services to individuals with intellectual disabilities. Having recently met with representatives from The Arc, we can attest that their challenges are reaching a crisis level and demand immediate legislative action.

The most immediate concern is the critical shortage of Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) due to an unsustainable wage disparity between state employees and nonprofit agency workers. While state employees performing the same work earn \$25.00 per hour or more, nonprofit agency DSPs are paid as little as \$17.25 per hour due to stagnant funding. This gap has made it nearly impossible to recruit and retain qualified staff, leading to higher turnover, increasing investigations into neglect, and diminished quality of care. Many potential hires opt for less demanding jobs in retail over working in a field where they are underpaid for performing essential, life-sustaining duties.

After 35 years of experience in this field, Arc leaders say they have never seen conditions this dire. With a 30% staffing deficit, existing employees are being pushed to their limits, and agencies are forced to hire less qualified candidates, further exacerbating turnover and operational instability. Without immediate financial investment and policy solutions, Connecticut's nonprofit human services sector will continue to deteriorate, leaving vulnerable individuals without necessary care and support.

Additionally, The Arc of Southington leadership has expressed strong concerns about the risk of a labor strike and the devastating impact it would have on those they serve. They have even asked for a policy requiring binding arbitration in their industry out of fear of what would happen if a strike were to occur. Unlike other professions, DSPs provide 24/7 essential care, and any disruption in staffing—even for a short time—could have devastating consequences for individuals who rely on them. The possibility of losing 75% of their workforce overnight would

make it impossible for agencies to function, leading to permanent closures and leaving thousands of individuals and families without critical support.

Finally, the proposal to allow striking workers to collect unemployment benefits raises serious concerns about the long-term viability of organizations like The Arc. If enacted, this measure could force the closure of agencies that provide life-sustaining care to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities. Allowing employees to collect unemployment while their jobs remain available and essential contradicts the very purpose of unemployment insurance and would put an additional financial strain on an already struggling sector.

This cannot wait. We need urgent action to increase funding for DSP wages and ensure sensible labor policies that protect both workers and the individuals they serve. We strongly urge your administration and legislative leadership to prioritize this issue before it becomes a full-scale humanitarian crisis. We are also asking our other legislative colleagues from the Southington delegation to join us in their full support on this matter as well.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue. We look forward to your response and hope we can work together to find a solution that protects the future of Connecticut's most vulnerable residents.

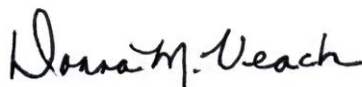
Sincerely,



State Senator Rob Sampson
16th District



State Representative Gale Mastrofrancesco
80th District



State Representative Donna Veach
30th District