

Testimony to Human Services Committee
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Good Morning Senator Doyle and Representative Walker. My name is Deborah Ullman. I am CEO of the YWCA Hartford Region and a member of the Board of Directors of Connecticut Association of Nonprofits. I am here to enlist your support for **SB 316 An Act Establishing A Commission on Nonprofit Health and Human Services.**

At the YWCA we are dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. We achieve this lofty sounding mission by providing services that create opportunities to change people's lives and make them stronger. Homeless women live in our shelter for up to 90 days to start on the path to employment or deal with their addiction. Young children get care and early education in an accredited child care facility while their moms work to support the family. Families at risk get support services and child care that help keep the family together through tough times.

Each year, the YWCA Hartford Region partners with the State of Connecticut to provide these services on its behalf. The financial struggle to provide quality, life changing services has become very difficult.

Over the last several years, we have taken many actions that have reduced our expenses. This includes joining buying cooperatives for utilities and worker's compensation, renegotiating all of our facilities contracts, revamping our phone systems and even penny pinching on the office supplies. Our employees have not gotten salary increases for the last two years. We cut our contribution to their retirement plan by 25% and they have had to absorb increases in their contributions to the health insurance plan. These workers, whose jobs require post secondary education up to and including a bachelor's degree, are living on the edge themselves. We cannot be viable long term if we can't adequately pay the professionals who work for us.

Historically, nonprofits have relied on individuals, corporations and private foundations to help fill the gaps between state funding and the cost of quality services. The gap is getting bigger and these sources are shrinking.

Unfortunately the need for services is not shrinking. By not adequately funding nonprofits, we are mortgaging our future. The challenges faced by our most vulnerable citizens won't disappear, they will just get worse and cost more. The homeless woman ends up in an emergency room in a diabetic coma. The three year old girl is soon a third grader who can't read and then a high school dropout. The family splits up and the child ends up in foster care. We need a funding approach that provides the best return for our taxpayers, while meeting the needs of our most vulnerable populations.

The solution to the funding crisis will not be simple but we can't let that stand in our way. Thank you for your time today and thank you for what we hope will be a transformational approach to strengthen the foundation of our service delivery system.