



DATE: March 8, 2021
TO: Public Health Committee
FROM: Ben Shaiken, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy, The Alliance
RE: S.B. 330 An Act Concerning the Provision Of Social Services In Hospitals.

Good morning Senator Abrams, Representative Steinberg, Senator Hwang, Representative Petit and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee.

My name is Ben Shaiken, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy at the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide association of community nonprofits. Community nonprofits provide essential services in every city and town in Connecticut, serving more than half a million people in need and employing 117,000 people across the State. They are an important part of what makes Connecticut a great place to live and work and an important piece of our economy.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the intent of **S.B. 330 An Act Concerning The Provision Of Social Services In Hospitals**. Connecticut's community providers already work closely with hospitals to ensure people who are frequent visitors to the emergency department are being connected with the services in the community they may need.

Community providers already participate in community care teams (CCTs), which are partnerships between hospitals and other community providers and stakeholders. These teams improve outcomes for people who are frequent emergency department visitors, many of whom the data show suffer from substance abuse disorders or mental health conditions, and/or who are homeless or housing unstable.

In addition, community nonprofits have with, great success, placed recovery coaches and certified recovery support specialists in hospitals across Connecticut. These professionals work in the hospitals to engage patients and their families and connect them with resources so they can have a "warm" handoff from the hospital to a behavioral health treatment provider.

We appreciate that S.B. 330 as drafted would mandate that DSS formalize programs like these with all hospitals in Connecticut. But a program such as this cannot come to fruition with investing additional state funding to address the needs of the often medically and behaviorally complicated needs of people who are high utilizers of emergency departments. Community providers are stretched too thin, after years of budget cuts and flat funding, to increase services without the ability to pay for the services they are providing. We also recognize that S.B. 330 is a Proposed Bill, and if the Committee chooses following today's hearing, will be drafted into full legislation. Therefore, **The Alliance requests that the term "within available appropriations" is not included in S.B. 330** should it be drafted. It would be difficult to craft a program that will better serve the residents of Connecticut "within available appropriations," and mandating the change proposed be cost-neutral may do more harm than good.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.