



DATE: February 16, 2021
TO: Commerce Committee
FROM: Ben Shaiken, Manager of Advocacy & Public Policy, The Alliance
RE: H.B. 6121 An Act Establishing a Workforce Development Pipeline for Persons with Disabilities.

Good afternoon Senator Hartley, Representative Simmons, Senator Martin, Representative Buckbee and members of the Commerce 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 provide testimony today in support of H.B. 6121 An Act Establishing A Workforce Development Pipeline for Persons with Disabilities. H.B. 6121 would create a program that integrates the immediate and future workforce needs and desires of employers with the education, training, and desires of individuals with disabilities who seek competitive employment. The program would be managed by the Department of Economic and Community Development.

Connecticut's community providers of supports and services for people with Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities, mental health and substance abuse diagnoses, and people returning to society after serving time in prison all participate in programs that help connect the people they support to good and fulfilling jobs. This proposed program aims to help promote to businesses across the state the message that employing the people nonprofits serve helps employers, too, because individuals with disabilities place high value on the relationships, rewards, and inclusion that employment offers which results in high loyalty and lower rates of absenteeism.

As such, we urge the final language of this bill to include community providers who help create employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the development of the program, along with the state agencies with which they contract, such as the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this H.B. 6121 and we look forward to working with the proponents of the bill and the Committee to create this important program.