



DATE: March 25, 2022

TO: Appropriations Committee

FROM: Gian-Carl Casa, President & CEO, The Alliance

RE: H.B. 5434 An Act Concerning Legislative Approval of the Expenditure of Federal Block Grant Funding

Good morning, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Gian-Carl Casa, President & CEO, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance). The Alliance is the statewide advocacy organization representing the nonprofit sector. Community nonprofits provide essential services to over half a million individuals and families in Connecticut every year and employ 115,000 Connecticut workers, improving the quality of life in communities across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.B. 5434, An Act Concerning Legislative Approval of the Expenditure of Federal Block Grant Funding. The Alliance supports legislative approval of federal block grant funding to promote transparency and ensure the dollars received are used for its intended purposes.

The State of Connecticut annually receives federal funding block grants to support a range of community services. As an example, the United States Department of Health and Human Services annually distributes social service block grants (SSBG) which is received, administered and allocated by Connecticut's Department of Social Services, with input from the Office of Policy and Management (OPM). As part of this review process, the Appropriations Committee, legislative committee of cognizance for SSBG, is required to hold a public hearing on the allocation plan, after which, the Committee approves or modifies the plan. The legislative (and public) review process, defined in CGS 4-28b, promotes transparency and helps ensure the dollars are used for essential services, such as housing, health care, food assistance, job training and much more.

This proposal would subject new federal funding of \$10,000 or more received in addition to previously approved federal block allocation plan to the same review process. Legislative oversight, and feedback from the public, will help ensure federal funding is used most effectively to ensure the quality and continuity of service delivery.

Already underfunded for over a decade, coupled with spiking inflation and a workforce crisis, community nonprofits that provide the bulk of essential services on behalf of the State are at a breaking point. Many of these services, supporting people with disabilities in residential and day treatment programs, delivering substance abuse and mental health treatments, providing shelter to people who are homeless or escaping domestic violence, and helping people re-enter the community from the criminal justice system and more, are supported by federal funding. With many nonprofit organizations seeing a significant demand for service, additional resources are required to address the need. Federal funding represents a critical resource to strengthen the human services delivery system, so receiving input from legislators and stakeholders providing the services will maximize its impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important matter.