



DATE: March 25, 2022

TO: Appropriations Committee

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

RE: H.B. 5435 An Act Establishing a Task Force on Substance Use Disorder Services and the Expenditure of Opioid Litigation Settlement Funds

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 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. 5435, An Act Establishing a Task Force on Substance Use Disorder Services and the Expenditure of Opioid Litigation Settlement Funds. The Alliance supports the establishment of a task force to review substance use disorder programs and services and make recommendations concerning the expenditure of opioid litigation settlement funds.

Connecticut will receive \$300 million over 18 years as part of the \$26 billion settlement with pharmaceutical distributors Cardinal, McKesson, and AmerisourceBergen and manufacturer Johnson & Johnson. The opioid litigation settlement funding represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to strengthen behavioral health services, many of which have been in crisis due the combination of chronic underfunding, spiking inflation, workforce shortage and an increase demand in services as people begin to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

To ensure those dollars are used effectively and ensure the quality and continuity of service delivery, the proposal seeks to establish a task force composed of legislators and people with experience in behavioral health. The proposed task force would include committee leadership of the Appropriations, Human Services and Public Health Committees, along nonprofit staff, behavioral health providers, counselors, people in recovery, representatives of groups supporting people with substance use disorders, family advocates and other recovery support staff.

Indeed, input from behavioral health professionals and people with lived experience with addiction and recovery are necessary so resources are distributed in a way that will have the biggest impact.

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