



**Boys &
Girls Aid**

March 20, 2017

Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Human Services,

Dear Co-chairs Senator Steiner-Hayward and Representative Rayfield, and Committee members:

My name is Vera Stoullil, Chief Operating Officer of Boys & Girls Aid. I am writing in reference to SB5526 to request that you please support a critical rate increase for Behavioral Rehabilitation Service (BRS) programs. BRS services are critical to help youth move out of state care and transition to families to care for them.

Our organization knows firsthand the negative impact insufficient rates has on programs youth need. We closed a residential program that had operated 30 years, and also returned 21 contract beds during the past several years because the payment rates were inadequate to provide the services required. The losses to our organization due to inadequate rates exceeded \$3 million dollars during the past five years, requiring us to utilize charitable dollars from our donors to fill the gap. A practice we simply cannot continue.

Our programs provide the support, structure and accountability needed to help the youth with their transition back to their families and communities. I have worked for Boys & Girls Aid for 16 years, and the time I have spent with staff and young people, telling them about program closures were the most difficult days of my tenure. The young women and men served by these programs shared the profound impact the program had on them and the unbearable loss they felt not only for themselves, but for the young people in the future that were now losing that resource.

A 16 month process of 3 state agencies, youth, advocates, CCO's and providers identified a 30% rate gap between current rates and what it costs to serve these youth. The Governor's Recommended Budget has included a rate increase for OYA & DHS providers. 23 Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) contracts have been given back to OYA and DHS in the last 48 months because of low rates, which are exacerbated by extremely challenging regulatory oversight and risk management for highly traumatized children and their behaviors.



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A tremendous burden has been placed on private agencies to deliver core services for the state agencies, without adequate resources. If this need is not addressed, the service system will continue to deteriorate. Our agency, at best will cut our BRS service capacity by 50% and at worst, will eliminate our BRS services entirely if rates are not increased. You cannot keep kids safe if you do not have adequate capacity in the system.

You have an open invitation to tour any of our programs and meet some of the young people benefiting from these services. We appreciate your support and assistance.

Respectfully,

Vera Stoullil
Chief Operating Officer