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To Whom It May COncern,

Founded in 1952, The Arc Quinebaug Valley is a 64-year-old grassroots advocacy and service organization founded by families looking for opportunities for their children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD). The Arc Quinebaug Valley services all of Windham County and employs approximately 150 people. We are more than a critical service provider to our communities and our residents; indeed, we are an economic driver in a struggling area of Connecticut.

“Supporting individuals to live life to the fullest” is the mission that drives our Board of Directors, many of whom are parents or loved ones of people with IDD, our leadership team and our direct support professionals. As a full-service agency providing group homes, vocational training, day programs and in-home supports to people with IDD, we also provide an Advocacy program in the area, a wellness program to help educate individuals on health, diet and wellness, as well as a Positive Choices/Healthy Relationships program which provides information on the body, sexual abuse, domestic abuse and what healthy relationships should consist of.

The individuals we serve are extremely active in our community. From Special Olympics, preparing food at a local community café, cleaning condos in the area, helping with fundraisers and simply giving back with any volunteer opportunities available, our individuals love to explore what our community has to offer and help make a difference. Their best interest is our priority here at The Arc, therefore, it is our responsibility to ensure that opportunities and learning experiences remain constant for a bright future ahead.

The State of Connecticut Department of Disabilities 5-year-plan, while comprehensive and thoughtful, says little about the state’s greatest asset: Its community-based, private provider network. Able to serve people with IDD nimbly in the spirit of person-centered supports, the provider network must be a key resource of Connecticut’s 5-year plan. To do otherwise would be to short-change people with IDD and their families throughout the state. Moreover, Connecticut’s extensive waiting list must be addressed, and this plan must be adapted to include a plan for providing services to all who need them. The state’s private provider network is a practical, affordable solution to addressing the needs of people with IDD who continue to wait desperately for supports they and their families require. It must be a key part of this 5-year plan.

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