



May 18, 2020

Hon. Ned Lamont
Governor
State of Connecticut
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Governor Lamont:

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.

We appreciate the hard work of you and your staff as you confront the myriad issues the COVID crisis raises for the people and places of our state. We thank you for giving front-line nonprofit employees rapid-testing priority, hundreds have already taken advantage of that system.

Nonprofits have unique needs both as the crisis continues and as Connecticut tries to get back to normal. They are on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic, serving children, families and communities. During this crisis, nonprofits are working to ensure continuity of mental health services, support for people with disabilities, helping people return to their communities from prison, feeding the hungry and unemployed, and other essential programs and services.

There are some issues which were previously submitted, that remain to be worked out so that the system of risk reduction and illness prevention works at maximum efficiency. If we can improve the system now, it will be better prepared for unforeseen circumstances as Connecticut reopens, especially if there is an upswing in infection rates later in the year. For example, despite some recent improvements, the distribution of PPE to nonprofit healthcare providers remains uneven and inadequate. Funding, of course, remains the primary concern as community nonprofits seek to maintain services now and retain them into the future.

To ensure a safe reopening for nonprofit staff and the people they serve, we respectfully ask that you:

1. **Commit to keep nonprofits financially whole.** If Connecticut reopens at reduced capacity, it will reduce the volume of services delivered and therefore lower the payments nonprofits receive for services. This reduction will come in addition to months of hemorrhaging revenue during Stay at Home orders. Community nonprofits need a commitment to be kept financially whole of all their state revenue, including fee-for-service payments and Medicaid-funded services, in order to be prepared to be the safety net for a reopening state. **Please ensure a portion of the \$1.4 billion from the federal Coronavirus Relief Fund is used to keep community nonprofits financially whole.**
2. **Ensure a six-month supply of PPE is available to all state contracted nonprofit providers.** Re-opening programs and services that have face-to-face interactions will require much more PPE than most organizations have available, beyond what they have requested from state agencies

and others to deal with this initial wave of infections.

3. **Authorize the continuing use of telehealth services.** Billing Medicaid for telemedicine has given patients a chance for patients to talk to caregivers without adding to crowds and risks in waiting rooms, eliminated transportation concerns for low-income and rural patients, and reduced staff exposure to the virus. **Please continue to allow telehealth services to be billed during and beyond the pandemic, with the same flexibility allowed during the emergency.**

Most providers did not have telehealth infrastructure in place prior to the pandemic and had to design a system overnight, including the purchasing of laptops, online security and privacy systems, virtual meeting platform licenses, issuance of smartphones to regular patients, etc. These investments have been made at enormous expense, much of it unplanned, with promising results that suggest continuing to use these systems after reopening the economy will lead to increased service delivery, efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, the use of telehealth services will be important during the transition period in which in-person, site-based programs may be operational, but families may continue to experience anxiety in meeting face to face. Telehealth services hold the possibility of long-term savings while reaching more people during and beyond the current pandemic.

4. **Provide nonprofits with the necessary means to test anyone they are serving.** An important part of preventing the spread of COVID is to know who has it. Proper testing of the people being served will allow nonprofit providers to keep non-infected people safe while appropriately working with those who test positive.
5. **Grant flexibility in funding and cost settlement by executive order.** Please allow community nonprofit providers to retain any state funds at the end of the fiscal year and give them flexibility to spend state dollars across line items. These changes will give community nonprofit providers the ability to do everything they can to stay in business beyond this current crisis and be prepared for a second wave of infection.
6. **Issue consistent transition guidelines across all state departments and program/service types** (in-home models, site-based programs, etc.) to ensure uniformity in timelines and expectations and prevent confusion and a disjointed approach to re-opening. Guidelines should take into consideration providers' need to employ a combination of transition planning approaches as well as the needs of families who may still be experiencing high anxiety regarding the delivery of in-person services.
7. **Issue clear guidelines regarding building capacity.** Nonprofits are worried about too many people coming through their doors as more and more people are unemployed, need food, are uninsured, and may be seeking mental health services and support. Nonprofits may not have the internal capacity or physical space to serve people safely, making continuation of telehealth services mentioned above even more critical.
8. **Issue standard processes for isolation/quarantine for COVID-19 positive cases.** Many providers continue to encounter COVID-19 positive cases and need clear isolation strategies for infected residents and staff.
9. **Maintain support for arts and cultural organizations.** The closures caused by the pandemic have hit arts and cultural organizations especially hard as most rely on admissions for the majority of revenue. Donations are expected to be substantially lower as more people are unemployed. They have also lost revenue generated through the lodging tax. Finally, many

smaller organizations simply do not have the savings to reopen at a limited capacity, and, should they be forced to close again due to a surge in new cases, won't have the ability to reopen a second time.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me at gcasa@ctnonprofitalliance.org with questions or for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gian-Carl Casa', written in a cursive style.

Gian-Carl Casa
President and CEO

cc: Paul Mounds, Chief of Staff
Secretary Melissa McCaw
Commissioner Josh Geballe, COO
Commissioner Beth Bye
Commissioner Rollin Cook
Commissioner Miriam Delphin-Rittmon
Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes
Commissioner Deidre Gifford
Commissioner David Lehman
Commissioner Gary Roberge
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Commissioner Jordan Scheff