

Alani Willett

TESTIMONY

before the HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Tuesday, MAR 06, 2007, 9am

in favor of SENATOR JONATHAN HARRIS'S BILL: S. B. No. 1274 (RAISED)

I am Alani Willett, a Hartford resident, a musician, and a gay man. I tested HIV positive in 1986. As a former resident of PETER'S RETREAT, I can speak to the need for compassionate AIDS housing.

Living at Peter's Retreat showed me that I can function effectively in spite of serious brain damage. —And it has stimulated me to start new activities.

After testing positive in Hawaii, I was O.K., until one day in '97, I found myself driving on the wrong side of the road. My doctor said, "Go to the emergency room!" There, I was diagnosed with an AIDS-defining brain infection. —And I was given two months to live. The brain damage had made me cuckoo, also incontinent.

Because I couldn't think straight, because my nearest relatives were in Connecticut, because I had no life-partner, poor decisions were made about my care. Gone is my precision-tooled wood shop. Gone are my two dear cats. I ended up living with the NURSE FROM HELL ☺—who verbally abused me.

She systematically disposed of my belongings, one by one. Gone is a handwritten love-poem by my deceased boyfriend. Gone is a lifetime's accumulation of sheet music. Gone are many other things of sentimental value. Being treated as an incompetent crushed my soul, and made me believe that I truly was incompetent.

~~Today, the parasite causing my brain infection has been suppressed, but the damage is permanent. I have lost left peripheral vision for life. Stress causes disorientation. I now operate on three-quarters of a brain and sheer determination!~~

The trauma in Hawaii, made me fearful and timid, but the Peter's Retreat staff encouraged me to do as much as I could.

They urged me to apply for the Trinity College GATEWAY TO THE HUMANITITES PROGRAM, and I now have two Trinity College credits with a 3.9 grade point average.

I've become active in politics for the first time in my life. I'm with "Connecticut Opposes The War". I'm a Commissioner for the Mayor's COMMISSION ON HIV/AIDS.

In short, Peter's Retreat has taught me to lead an active and purposeful life.