The Arc Connecticut

Advocates for people with intellectual disabilities
and related developmental disabilities

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Testimony re:
S.B. #1220, "An Act Concerning The Birth-To-Three Program"

H.B. #7007, "An Act Renaming The Department of Mental Retardation"

S.B. #683, "An Act Concerning Early Childhood Lead Poisoning"
and
H.B. #7008, "An Act Concerning The Department of Mental Retardation"

Before the Committee on Public Health
March 14, 2007

Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon. I am Lynn Warner, the Executive Director of the Arc of Connecticut, a 54-year-old statewide advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. We have 23 local chapters throughout the State that provide supports, services, and advocacy for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

I am here today to testify on **S.B. #1220, "An Act Concerning The Birth-To-Three Program"**

We are pleased that the Governor's budget and Raised Bill #1220 have proposed to restore and expand the valuable Birth-to-Three program for babies and toddlers with disabilities and their families. This would restore eligibility to very low birth weight newborns, and for children with significant delays in speech and biological risk factors, it would also expand eligibility for children with mild or unilateral hearing loss.

BUT, if adequate funding isn't appropriated to the private nonprofit agencies providing these crucial services – it will become impossible to meet the needs of even more children or retain qualified and dedicated therapists at a reasonable wage – let alone attract new ones. If there is

recognition of the value of early intervention, the valuable services that are provided by these agencies *must also be recognized* and their efforts must be supported with consistent and adequate long term funding.

H.B. #7007, "An Act Renaming The Department of Mental Retardation"

A name change for DMR has been discussed and pushed for many years. As a matter of fact, nearly 10 years ago, Arc/CT teamed up with People First to re-name the Department. The terms "retardation," "retarded," etc. have become extremely negative over the years and are now referred to as the "r" words. These words are now normally used as everyday slag often replacing old slang like "idiot" or "moron" – which were also once the official words to describe people with intellectual disabilities. It is long past time to make a change and we are very pleased that with your support DMR will be renamed The Department of Developmental Services! ***It is about time!***

Along with this Bill, we hope that the Connecticut Legislature will continue to recognize the importance of respectful language for new and revised laws by requiring the use of terminology that puts the person before the disability.

S.B. #683, An Act Concerning Early Childhood Lead Poisoning"

Committee Bill #683 establishes a system to track special education services for children with high lead levels and then analyze the data obtained to assess the children's growth as well as the effectiveness of the early intervention services for these students. Studies conducted for more than 25 years report conclusively that lead poisoning causes developmental delays. It makes good sense to determine if services designed to minimize the negative effects of lead poisoning are effective and if not – why not?

The Arc of Connecticut has always worked to eradicate lead poisoning – and will continue to support such measures aimed at minimizing the detrimental effects until lead poisoning is completely eliminated from our society.

H.B. #7008, "An Act Concerning The Department of Mental Retardation"

Finally, The Arc of Connecticut has no objections to H.B. #7008 and would support your approval of the Bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.