



Advocates for people with intellectual disabilities and related developmental disabilities

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February 26, 2008

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Testimony before Committee on Human Services

Re: S.B. #413, “(Raised) An Act Establishing A Community Provider Rescue Fund Account And Community-Based Services Commission”

by

Lynn Warner, Executive Director/The Arc of Connecticut

Secretary
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Arc of Farmington Valley
Canton

Senator Harris, Representative Villano, and Members of the Human Services Committee:

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Middletown

I am Lynn Warner, Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, a 56-year-old statewide advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities (formerly called “mental retardation”) and their families. We have 23 local chapters that provide supports, services, and advocacy for individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout Connecticut.

Immediate Past President
Dawn Lazaroff
Tri-County Arc
Columbia

I am here today to testify in support of **Senate Bill #413, “(Raised) An Act Establishing A Community Provider Rescue Fund Account and Community-Based Services Commission”**, as it directly impacts the private provider service community in Connecticut and all the individuals and families that they serve.

Contributions are tax-deductible

Historically, The Arc providers have been in existence providing services for the longest period of time and get paid the lowest amounts. And there appears to be no relief in sight with a **zero COLA** proposed in the Governor’s budget.

As advocates – representatives of our Association have been contacting the changing administrations in the Governor’s office and coming before this Committee for nearly 20 years describing the plight of desperate individuals and families and how important serves are to them. We have urged you to appropriate higher COLAs and to provide the necessary funding for programs and services to allow them to continue to operate and also to retain decent staff members. Today is no different. How upsetting is that?

Formerly Connecticut Association for Retarded Citizens (CARC)

The Arc/Connecticut, Inc. Member Chapters: Futures, Inc., Middletown / Greater Enfield Arc / Family Options, Watertown / Arc of Farmington Valley / Friends of New Milford, Inc. / Litchfield County Arc / LOV-Arc, Westbrook / MARC, Inc., Manchester / MARC: Community Resources, Portland / Arc of Meriden-Wallingford / Arc of Greater New Haven / Arc/New London County / Options, Unlimited / Arc of Plainville / Arc of Quinebaug Valley / SARAH Inc., Guilford / SARAH Seneca Residential Services / SARAH Tuxis Residential Services / STAR, Norwalk / Arc of Southington / Tri County Arc, Columbia / Waterbury Arc / WeCAHR, Danbury

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It is no exaggeration to say agencies are currently facing deficits in upwards of \$250,000 *plus* while the cost of doing business continuing to rise. When health insurance, oil and fuel prices, liability insurance, and worker's compensation costs are spiraling upwards adding to the strain of budgets already spread too thin – how can the people they serve NOT be directly effected?

In addition, **Section 3 of Senate Bill #34, “An Act Implementing The Governor’s Recommendations With Respect to Social Services Programs”** (Regarding Residential Care Homes) only increases the stress and burden placed on private providers who provide residential services funded by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS.) We strongly urge you to repeal both the 2% Rate Cap on Community Living Arrangements, and to repeal the Rate Freeze for Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (ICF/MRs) which receive Room & Board funding through DSS.

I have no misconception that providers will be turning in their keys to their programs to you today – even due to the lack of adequate funding and the constraint on current funding. BUT, ***IF*** needed services haven't been cut, ***IF*** vital staff member positions have not filled, and ***IF*** vulnerable lives not placed in turmoil – **they will be.** *These circumstances are disheartening, exhausting and expensive for Providers, but imagine the confusion, chaos, and highly disruptive environment it creates for the individuals they serve.*

The private provider system cannot continue to be funded in the same manner it has and still be expected to thrive and provide quality care.

We thank you for raising Senate Bill #413 and we urge you to vote favorably on it. We believe that it outlines the steps that need to be taken to insure the private providers can ***continue*** doing the outstanding work they it already do. We also encourage you to repeal SB #34 Section 3 for all the same reasons.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.