

Good afternoon Representative Slossberg, Representative Caruso and members of the committee.

My name is Heidi Ricci and this is Mary Gomez. We are here to talk to you about **bill 678**.

We are here as citizens in which you serve and as a voice that should not be neglected any longer.

We are citizens that work very hard with the individuals we serve 40 hours a week and receive very little pay compared to other programs servicing DDS individuals. If not us, who would take of our individuals with developmental disabilities with the respect and concern for their well being and independence?

Our job responsibilities include bathroom assistance, feces clean-up, constant monitoring for their safety and of the environment, continuous teaching of practical skills in everyday life, constant redirection of unsafe acts, all in a very fast paced and hectic atmosphere that requires being aware of all these things combined on a daily basis.

Our program, The Arc of Meriden-Wallingford, Inc. is a day program in which individuals come to from their residential homes. Besides residential programs and state employees who earn more money than we do, we are the ones who really work to continue to serve our individuals in the most beneficial way possible and keep this program going. All other programs in the state of Connecticut and even in other states serving DDS clients are paid more than \$10.78/hour.

Our staff to client ratio is always under which makes it difficult to provide the needed services to the individuals we serve. The turn over rate is also high, not because of our job but because of the lack of pay we receive from the state. We have pleaded with our state representatives year after year without results that we can notice, and have felt neglected far too long.

We want to support you and be proud employees with a college education in this field. However, we find it very hard to support our state representatives who continue to neglect our voices. We would like to be heard this last time. Please take the time to help us and to work on a solution to create proud citizens of the state of Connecticut by our state representatives.

Thank you