

## Testimony before the Public Health Committee

Feb. 29, 2008

### SB 40

Good morning, Senator Handley, Representative Sayers, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Pat Droney and I am here today to testify in support of SB 40, An Act Concerning Supportive Housing.

I have a supportive housing miracle to report: A formerly homeless young man with a psychiatric disability, after a 5 year odyssey, which included being transported from his home and community in New Haven to a rogue detention unit in a Hartford nursing home, away from his family, church and community, is now receiving appropriate treatment and services in New Haven. The cost to the state of CT for this housing and treatment, housing advocates estimate, is some \$54.00 per day, as opposed to \$276.00 a day, which is the current rate posted in the hallway of this nursing home at which detention masquerades as "treatment."

This man's thought disorder, a complication of schizophrenia, is being treated. When I visited him in New Haven last Thursday, Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>, he was looking forward to getting his first nicotine patch to help cure him of smoking addiction. I have been able to follow this man's odyssey as he has my cell phone number and I have visited him regularly and often. The nursing home that was detaining this man against his will is one of several nursing homes which are the subject of the lawsuit filed in federal court in 2/2006 against the state of CT, DMHAS, DSS, and DPH. This man was among the first interviewed before the lawsuit was filed. This man remembers the attorney from the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law in Washington, D.C. as "Miss Jennifer." Attorneys from Connecticut's Office of Protection and Advocacy, the attorneys from Bazelon and pro bono attorneys from the New York law firm involved allege that the state is violating the federal Americans with Disabilities Act, the U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Olmstead v. L.C.* and other civil rights laws by not providing appropriate treatment, housing and services in the community.

This young man is a living testament to how critical stable housing is for someone with a mental illness. Supportive housing has given him the opportunity to live successfully in our community, and has saved him from further debilitating institutionalization. Please support SB 40 to maintain the 150 units of supportive housing from last year's budget. I also urge you to fund an additional 650 new units of supportive housing in Connecticut this year—the results speak for themselves.

Thank you.

Pat Droney

West Hartford