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**Public Health Committee Public Hearing
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Raised S.B. 498: An Act Authorizing Bonds Of The State For A New Facility In
Manchester For Persons With Developmental Disabilities.

Submitted By: Ken Charpentier, Executive Director

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, Public Health Committee Members. My name is Ken Charpentier. I am the Executive Director for MARC, Inc. of Manchester and I am here today to speak in favor of Senate Bill number 498 "An Act Authorizing Bonds Of The State For A Facility In Manchester For Persons With Developmental Disabilities" and to ask for your support.

MARC, Inc. currently provides support to nearly 250 individuals with developmental disabilities and their families across a broad spectrum of services.

Our employment services include job training, job development, transportation, on the job assistance and follow up supports for both the employer and employee. More than 200 people served by our employment department are currently working in twenty three different towns throughout the region.

Our Residential Department provides support to forty eight people living throughout Manchester. Supports are based on individual needs and interests and include transportation, shopping, budgeting, skill development, and recreation. Hours of support are based on individual needs and range from as few as six hours per week to twenty four hours per day.

Our retirement Service currently supports twenty five people. Retirees choose from a constantly evolving menu of activities developed around their interests. Activities include the first Chapter of the Red Hat society formed by people with disabilities and the MARC Visiting Angels, a group of seniors who visit local nursing homes to bring good cheer and companionship.

Our Respite service offers a variety of social and recreational activities to people with disabilities who live with parents or other family members. This service offers people a chance to connect with old and new friends while providing families with a much needed break from the demands of twenty four hour care.

Our Self Advocacy Committee participates in a wide range of activities designed to foster awareness and encourage positive change. Many of our members are on local, state and national boards working hard to ensure that disability does not limit the achievement of personal dreams.

For the past eight years we have provided diversity training to every fourth grade student in the Manchester Public school system and to many private schools. This training encourages kids to dispel stereotypes or fears and to recognize that all people deserve to be accepted and welcomed as equally important members of our community.

Our society has come a long way during the past 56 years in recognizing the inherent rights of all people to lead active, productive lives in our community based on individual choice. The walls have come down for people with developmental disabilities; many barriers to full participation in community life have been removed. No longer are people relegated to lives of seclusion based on a happenstance of birth. We have come a long way as a society but we still have work to do to arrive at the day when people with developmental disabilities are recognized as equally important members of our diverse and dynamic community.

The design and construction of a new facility is an exciting time for all of us at MARC, Inc. After nearly six decades of service to our community we see the day when we will have a permanent home in Manchester. No longer will we be faced with the long term uncertainty of lease agreements and periodic moves from one location to another. We have outgrown our current, 15,000 square foot facility. Our planned twenty five thousand square foot building will accommodate the expansion of services to meet the needs of our community for decades to come. A primary reason for the need to move to a larger facility is the increasing percentage of people we serve that are approaching retirement age. As with the U.S. population in general, many of the people we have served for decades are experiencing the challenges associated with age. Our new facility will include a Senior Center that is twice the size of our current location, and will be furnished with state of the art adaptive and rehabilitative equipment. Without this expansion we will not be able to accept additional people into our Senior Center. We have provided a brochure for review by Committee members entitled "Building on Our Legacy – Building for the Future". This brochure outlines the various reasons that the construction of a larger facility is critical to the long term achievement of our mission.

At MARC, Inc. we can imagine a day when people with disabilities are recognized universally as valued members and equal partners of our society. Every individual, every citizen deserves no less. Your support for Senate Bill 498 will help us to achieve this mission. Thank you for providing the opportunity to speak before your committee today.