

*Testimony of Elizabeth Civitello*

*Before the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly*

*Friday, February 20, 2009*

Good afternoon, distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today against the Governor's proposal to shut down Cedarcrest Hospital.

My name is Elizabeth Civitello and I have a grandson at Cedarcrest who is 28 years old with a pervasive mental illness disorder and is also autistic. My grandson has come along very well and made a lot of progress, but he needs more time at Cedarcrest. Cedarcrest has helped families. He has such ties to the staff members there. Not just the caring staff, but also the doctors. I can sleep well knowing he's well taken care of. What's the alternative?

It scares me to think of him going somewhere with more hostile residents. Right now isn't the time to cut services. We are all tax payers and it doesn't seem right to pick on the weakest people in our society, people that need Cedarcrest.

Please, keep Cedarcrest open and available for patients who need help from professionals, qualified doctors, and caring staff. Cedarcrest provides not only the services, but also the attention that people like my grandson need. They make sure patients get everything they need. It's a caring facility, not somewhere you're concerned for the safety of your family members.

The goal of the hospital is to allow patients to live to their potential with the goal of eventually being in the community. Staff helps him and you can see that they really get to know their patients, my grandson is not just another number. If he doesn't like certain things, they take care of him and give him something good to eat. It would be a hardship for so many families in Connecticut if Cedarcrest closed down.

I don't agree with privatizing any beds because I don't feel the private sector has adequate resources to provide the type of care Cedarcrest provides. We have no idea where our family members would be housed, and they're in such a good place right now. That's a very frightening idea. The patients at Cedarcrest need stability and support so they can go on and have good lives.

There are so many aspects of what the hospital provides, how can you consider closing down a hospital like Cedarcrest? When someone is ill, they need a medical facility, a hospital. That's what Cedarcrest is, with extended services as well. Again, the ultimate goal is for patients to be reintegrated into the community.

We have a responsibility to provide for the people who have the greatest needs and as a Grandmother and conservator I urge you to not close down such an important hospital.