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Advocates for people with intellectual disabilities and related developmental disabilities

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Testimony before Committee on Human Services
Re: H.B. #6668, "(Raised) An Act Providing Quality Care, Financial Oversight and Nursing Home Funding Reform

by
Lynn Warner, Executive Director/The Arc of Connecticut

Good morning Senator Doyle, Representative Walker, and Members of the Human Services Committee. I am Lynn Warner the Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, a 57-year-old statewide advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. We have 23 local chapters that provide supports, services, and advocacy for individuals with intellectual disabilities throughout Connecticut.

I am here today to testify in support of **House Bill #6668, "(Raised) An Act Providing Quality Care, Financial Oversight and Nursing Home Funding Reform.**

The demand for long term supports is a critical issue in the 21st century. Yet nationally – we lack a coordinated, comprehensive and proactive system for delivery of long term supports.

With the first of the "baby boomers" now retiring, the need for qualified direct-care support workers and family caregivers will continue to be stretched even farther than it is currently. This persistent strain and drain on a shrinking quality workforce will only exacerbate the tedious struggles of individuals with disabilities to be able to live in the homes of their own choice as their needs change due to aging.

A well-trained, adequately compensated, and readily available direct support workforce is essential to providing the necessary supports and services to people with disabilities.

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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The way in which the Private Provider system is currently funded has allowed for the creation of a workforce crisis – evidenced by low wages, a lack of health insurance, high turnover, and a shortage of quality staff members. These problems are not new, but heading into the near future, as all populations age, present a great threat to the lives of the people we advocate for and support – as well as their families.

Establishing a *Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council* would be a significant and timely approach to addressing this looming crisis; particularly as the majority of those appointed to the council will be individuals with disabilities, their surrogates, or advocates. The Council will have the duties and responsibilities of recruiting, educating, training, and maintaining a list of qualified personal care attendants, thereby relieving a significant burden on individuals and families.

The Arc of Connecticut commends this committee for tackling such an important issue while charging those who receive the services to be a part of the solution. Moving forward, we would like to offer assistance to both the committee and to the council when it is formed. Working together with other interested and knowledgeable groups in the state can only create better working conditions for those providing services as well as for all those receiving the services.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.