



Advocates for people with intellectual disabilities and related developmental disabilities

43 Woodland Street, Suite 260, Hartford, CT 06105

Telephone: 860-246-6400 Facsimile: 860-246-6406

Website: www.arcofct.org

President

Diane Aubin

The Arc of New London County
Norwich

Executive Director

Lynn C. Warner

March 17, 2010

First Vice President

Imelda Reno

The Arc of Farmington Valley
Canton

Testimony before The Government Administration and Elections Committee

by

Leslie Simoes, Assistant Executive Director/The Arc of Connecticut

Second Vice President

Barry Sheffel

The Arc of Meriden-Wallingford
Meriden

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, and Members of the GAE Committee. My name is Leslie Simoes and I am the Assistant Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, a 58-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.

Secretary

Lori Baer

The Arc of Litchfield County
Torrington

Treasurer

Anthony Recck

Futures, Inc.
Middletown

I am here this morning to testify against two bills.

Immediate Past President

Ken Cholewinski

SARAH Seneca
Guilford

S. B. No. 424 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AGENCY CONSOLIDATION AND THE CREATION OF THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES CONSOLIDATION STEERING COMMITTEE.

Contributions are

tax-deductible

S. B. No. 28 AN ACT CONSOLIDATING STATE AGENCIES AND ELIMINATING CERTAIN LEGISLATIVE COMMISSIONS.

SB 424 would merge existing human service agencies into one large agency and The Arc of Connecticut objects to this idea and the notion that it would be a positive move for the individuals receiving services from these agencies. In fact, it was The Arc many years ago that advocated for the creation of what is now called The Department of Developmental Services. If we believed for a moment that the merging of agencies could free up dollars to broaden service for the hundreds of people on the Waiting List, for example, we would have a very different view.

The Arc/Connecticut, Inc. Member Chapters: Futures, Inc., Middletown / Greater Enfield Arc / Family Options, Watertown / The Arc of Farmington Valley / Friends of New Milford, Inc. / The Arc of Litchfield County / LOV-Arc, Westbrook / MARC, Inc., Manchester / MARC: Community Resources, Portland / The Arc of Meriden-Wallingford / The Arc of Greater New Haven / The Arc of New London County / Options, Unlimited / The Arc of Plainville / The Arc of Quinebaug Valley / SARAH Inc., Guilford / SARAH Seneca Residential Services / SARAH Tuxis Residential Services / STAR, Norwalk / The Arc of Southington / Tri County Arc, Columbia / Waterbury Arc / WeCAHR, Danbury

Affiliated with The Arc of the United States

When this idea was proposed back in 2003-04, we heard from Directors of several Arcs across the country where mergers have taken place and they only increased the difficulty for vulnerable people trying to navigate a mega-bureaucracy. It was chaos.

Having a separate service agency not only provides continuity of services it provides services by skilled professionals trained and supervised by professionals in the field of developmental disabilities. These agencies exist for the purpose of assisting people with disabilities to lead better quality lives and to become as independent as possible. The Arc would strongly suggest with this Committee to start with a determination of how well the agencies are meeting that goal, and then looking at whether efficiencies can be achieved through reorganization.

The second bill, **SB 28**, would eliminate certain legislative commissions and again, The Arc objects to this idea and the notion that this move would be somehow beneficial to the people of Connecticut. A particular commission, The Commission on Aging, has filled the huge need for advocacy in the state and has most likely been a part of over all cost savings because of information, education and resources the commission offers.

The U. S. Supreme Court's Olmstead decision in 1998 recognized that the interests of people with disabilities were the same, no matter what their age. Since that time Connecticut's Long Term Care Plan, prepared at the direction of the Legislature, and was expanded to cover people with disabilities of all ages. The Commission on Aging has been a driving force in the preparation and implementation of that Plan.

I urge this committee to reject the proposed bills SB 424 and SB 28. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and