

Representative Walker and Senator Doyle and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee; I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in support of these important legislative initiatives.

My name is Jennifer Charbonnier, Clinical Service Director of Key Human Services, a private non profit providing an array of services to individuals with intellectual disabilities or developmental delays since 1989. For the past 26 years I have worked with children and their families with DCF involvement. The last four years of which I have worked with Key Human Services specifically developing and supervising therapeutic group homes for adolescent girls with developmental delays and significant psychiatric issues.

Today, I am representing Key Human Services, Inc. and providing testimony in strong support of H.B. No. 5430, An Act Concerning the transfer of Children and Youth from out-of-state residential facilities to Therapeutic Group Homes in the State by telling you about Key's homes and one of the young ladies that live there.

Each of our homes is in a neighborhood and is indistinguishable from the other homes. The focus of daily living is the development of social, communication, vocational and work skills. We provide individual, family and group psychotherapy and support the young ladies interacting with staff and their peers in socially and community appropriate behaviors. Additionally we focus on healthy lifestyle, life skills, independent living skills, community safety, and developing an increased range of functional coping skills to support her in the real world.

The home in Hebron has been opened for four years and the one in Bolton has been opened for two; as a combined total we have served 18 young ladies who

have attended school vocational training and work opportunities in the local communities including RHAM High School, Bolton High school, assessors' office of the town of Hebron, and MCC.

The girls currently are and have been employed at CCMC, Noel's Bakery, Wal-Mart, and private catering opportunities through school. The girls have participated in the school band, chorus, sports teams and school social clubs. Recreational activities focus on community involvement including volunteering at domestic violence shelters, animal shelters, senior centers and farms.

I would like to share with you the story of one of the young ladies. She is from the Norwich area and is 18 years old. She has been with us for two years. Prior to coming to our home, she had been in residential treatment, had multiple psychiatric hospitalizations and has had numerous foster placements.

When first she came to us she was an accomplished runaway, and willing to climb out windows and head off into the night with no idea of a place to go. She would engage in self injurious behaviors or expressed thoughts of wanting to die when frustrated or having any strong feelings. She was adamant that she does not develop relationships and that she would not be changing anything about herself.

In the time that she has been with us she has formed significant relationships with staff, peers, co-workers, her instructors and her work supervisors. She is more tolerant of frustration, able to advocate for herself, perform routine activities of daily living including cooking, cleaning, laundry, paying bills and managing her own medication. She has pets for which she is entirely responsible and she takes the care

of them seriously. She is a role model to her peers and routinely offers them information about her reptiles.

In the not too distant future, this young lady will be able to live independently likely in her own apartment with one roommate where they will have minimal additional support. She will be able to be competitively employed within the state of CT.

Since she is gainfully employed in the Norwich area which will enable her to maintain contact with her family as well as be involved with her extended support network. Since her arrival she has lost 50 pounds and now has her own health related goals as a result of learning how to plan meals, assess nutritional values and the routine health benefits of exercise.

To close I would like to restate our support for H.B. No. 5430. Also, Key Human Services is in support of S.B. No. 316, An Act establishing a commission on nonprofit Health and Human Services. I thank you for your time and consideration of these critically important issues. I would also encourage you to contact me to see our Therapeutic Group Homes in Bolton and Hebron.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, or for additional information:

(860) 681-4886 or e-mail at jcharbon@keystonehumanservices.org.

