

**SERVICES COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING – BILL PREVENTING DDS
FROM MOVING TO ATTENDANCE-BASED REIMBURSEMENT AND BILL
SETTING UP A COMMISSION ON PRIVATIZATION**

My name is Joan Volpe and I work for Ability Beyond Disability a non-profit organization serving many people with disabilities. Today, I will be testifying on the attendance-based reimbursement and privatization.

Six years ago, Ability Beyond Disability closed its sheltered workshop, totally integrating 200 consumers throughout western CT in jobs and activities of their choosing. The transition was highly praised by DDS and throughout the country. Today, as part of a cost saving measure DDS is implementing a 90% attendance requirement on our consumers, many of whom have mobility issues, behavioral challenges or are older and frail. By implementing the attendance rate system DDS's goal is to save \$2.5 million dollars in the private sector.

Our families are frightened and angry. Frightened for the future and angry that the State doesn't provide sufficient funding for their kids while much more money is made available to people served in the public sector.

We had thought that legislative intervention a few months ago had convinced DDS to at least delay this plan subject to legislative review but apparently not. The 90% attendance is arbitrary and virtually unachievable as a practical matter and will reduce our funding by at least \$250,000 and perhaps as much as \$500,000. So much for consumers' choice to be a part of their community! We have had to cut 3 full time positions who had previously worked directly with the individuals we serve. This negatively impacts the quality of life for folks to be a part of their community. By reducing staff it creates a higher staff to consumer ratio which makes it more difficult to keep consumers safe while they are in the community.

Ability Beyond Disability firmly believes that privatization is the right thing to do. The outcomes of private providers are better and cost less to the State. The dual system of programs operated in both the public and private sectors is not only highly inefficient and unfair from a consumer funding perspective; there are quality disparities as well. For example, we maintain our homes much better than the homes operated by the state.

The cost of operating a dual system adds to the overall cost to the state and to the taxpayers. There is an answer to reducing costs within the human service sector. The answer lies with a commitment to eliminating the provision of services through state run programs. Community providers are a key part of the solution to the state's fiscal challenges