

# 30

Appropriations Committee

Hearing date: March 2, 2011

Testimony by Jill Cohen

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Esteemed Members of the Appropriation Committee, My name is Jill Cohen, from Bridgeport, and I am here to Testify on behalf of our Citizens with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. My son 34 yer old Steven is one of those Individuals who receives a multi-layered tier of services from Ability Beyond Disability, a non-profit organization and a leader in the best practices to create client centered care plans that truly enhance lives. I serve on their Family Advisory Board and participate in fund raising events to help try to close the funding gaps. That being said, they do it on a shoe string that is about to snap under the burden of chronic underfunding for years. I realize you all have heard these words, but what real meaning do they have for you? Let me try to bring some images to mind.

My son wasn't feeling well this past Monday afternoon. His primary care staffer noticed this and took steps to find out what was wrong. A coordinated effort began with in the organization with good communication. Tyler took Steven to the agency nurse Dawn., Edwin the house manager called me to advise me. Dawn the nurse sent Tyler and Steven to the Urgent Care Center for an ultra-sound. Majesta met Tyler and Steven there with Steven's medical information. I got the next call that they were on their way to Danbury Hospital ER with a problem. I met them at the ER. Tyler and Majesta were aware that Steven and I were worried. They were kind and attentive to BOTH of us. It was a crowded ER and Steven was restless and nervous. Tyler and Majesta and I took turns distracting Steven with funny stories and cell phone games to keep him calm and distracted from his pain. Steven responded to them as if they were his family. Laughing, making inside jokes and giving and receiving support. " Don't worry Steve, it can't be as bad as going bald" said Tyler.

" Hey Steven, which HOMETOWN Buffet should we go to next week? Which is your favorite? asked Tyler.

"Tyler do you have any change on you for the vending machine?" Steve asked.

" Steve you are NPO until we see the Dr." said Majesta.

" Oh but I'm starving, all I need is a hot chocolate so they can draw my blood easier. hahahah! " said Steven.

We were in the ER for almost 5 hours before they sent Steven home. It was hugs all around!

This little vignette may seem boring to you , but to me as a veteran parent, it is a slice of heaven. One day I will not be able to go to the ER to support my son, as one day I will be too old or gone from this world. So I need to do EVERYTHING I possibly can before that time to ensure

that people like Tyler and Majesta want to work in this field to support Steven and those like him into old age. As a member of the Family Empowerment Task Force, I and others like me are focused on the fiscal health and well being of those who serve our loved ones. It is our insurance that our kids will be respected, loved and supported in their goals and life dreams. As parents our commitment is from the cradle to the grave. I urge you to consider the human cost to underfunding these services. Please do the right thing for our kids.

Thank you