

**TESTIMONY TO THE HEALTH AND HOSPITALS SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
MARCH 2, 2011**

Senator Harp, Representative Candelaria, members of the Appropriations Subcommittee, I am Stephen Becker, President and CEO of HARC, Inc., an organization that serves people with intellectual and related disabilities. Founded in 1951, HARC is a grassroots family organization that provides life span services including: birth-to-three/early intervention, family support, respite, supported employment, adult day program, recreation, residential, behavioral health, elderly and advocacy services.

Today, we ask that you maintain critical funding and services for people with intellectual and related disabilities by making no cuts to the budget for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Throughout his campaign, Governor Malloy promised that he would maintain the safety net, which he later defined as those services that support the most vulnerable of Connecticut's citizens. He has fulfilled that promise by essentially maintaining last year's funding levels for DDS, the agency that supports the participants we serve.

We are grateful for Governor Malloy's support, but we also recognize that funding still remains vulnerable. The budget calls for significant tax increases and major concessions from public sector unions. In addition, the Governor has asked for an increase in his rescission authority from 5% to 10%. We are acutely aware that this rescission authority can mean deep cuts to several agency budgets, including DDS.

We ask that funding levels be maintained to provide safety net services for all who need them. For the past 60 years, HARC has worked tirelessly to create lives of dignity and inclusion for people with intellectual disability. The efforts of parents, family members and other advocates have resulted in what were once unimaginable lives for people with intellectual

disability. Now, people with intellectual disability live and work in the community, enjoy time with family and friends and are often their own most effective advocates. Budget cuts place all of these advances at risk.

We embody the Governor's motto of "shared sacrifice" everyday. Years of funding shortfalls have resulted in our freezing positions, foregoing wage increases and passing on to our staff increases in health care costs we simply could not absorb. Our efforts to raise private dollars are challenged as well, as private donors have shifted their focus to "essential services", such food, clothing and shelter, leaving fewer dollars available to fund programs like those at HARC. Without adequate funding, our families are left to make dire choices to care for their loved ones, and our staff must make do with far less than they deserve for the important work that they do. We have done all we can to maintain services for our families and jobs for our staff, but we fear that with more budget cuts, we can do no more.

Therefore, I urge you to maintain the DDS budget as it was proposed by Governor Malloy and do all you can to protect and preserve the safety net.

Thank you for your time and consideration.