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Thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Kathleen Flynn from Wallingford. My Brother, Tim Kenney, is a resident of a group home in Wallingford run by Oak Hill.

Tim is 48 years old and is diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and Mental Retardation. Tim has always been confined to a wheelchair and verbally is difficult to understand. Tim is the youngest of four siblings in our family. In 1990, our Mother passed away from cancer at the age of 64. Shortly before her death she was honored by this group namely Mary Fritz with a proclamation for her 30 years of service to the Town of Wallingford first as Town Council Secretary and later as the first Administrative Assistant to the Mayor. She held this position until her death.

Tim was living with our parents at this time and was 27 years old. Tim was very mature about leaving our parents house and moving in to his new group home. My sister, brother and I were all married and on our own and our Dad could not care for Tim on his own at the age of 72.

For 20 years now, we have felt very blessed that Tim is in such good care. That level of care cannot be lessened. What has brought me here today is that as Tim is aging things are getting harder for him such as feeding himself. Through budget cuts, Tim is not eligible for occupational therapy. Tim will have to rely on his staff to help feed him. Tim already has to rely on his wonderful staff for all his needs getting up out of bed, dressed, bathroom, etc. Tim's independence and dignity cannot be taken away.

Our Mother's hopes were that Tim could live independently of his family, but that his siblings would still be very much a part of his life. I can say that our family has grown since Tim has become a part of the Oak Hill family. Tim is surrounded by people who love and care for him. Tim's staff does a very intimate job and cannot be compensated enough for all the hard work they do. My family is very grateful and is glad to have Oak Hill and individuals such as Tim's House Manager, Shirley Lyn and her wonderful staff for their support. When thanked, their response is it is our privilege.

In paying things forward, my siblings and I would like to be able to mentor other families in situations similar to ours. One of our recommendations would be for their loved one to be able to live in an assisted community such as Tim. We do realize that a waiting list is not out of the question, but what is out of the question is that the services Tim, his housemates and others rely on cannot be cut. We want to work with the Governor to help preserve the group homes; we are appreciative of this monumental task of the budget. We are the voice of those that cannot speak for themselves.

I invite you all to our Legislative Breakfast on March 16, 2011 to meet Tim and his housemates between 8 and 10 am in the Executive Dining Room.

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