

TESTIMONY OF JAMES W. HEFFERNAN

TO THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 1, 2011

Senator Cassano, Representative Gentile and members of the Planning and Development Committee, my name is James Heffernan. I currently serve on the DDS Council on Developmental Services and on the Harc Board of Directors; as a parent of a young man with intellectual disability who benefited greatly by residing in a group home in East Hartford, CT. I would like to share my personal thoughts about two proposed bills: H.B. # 5142 AND H.B. #5259 both of which are styled: *An Act Requiring Public Hearings on the Location of Group Homes*. Since I will be out of state on February 7, 2011 when oral testimony is heard thank you for allowing me to participate in the hearing via this written testimony in opposition to both bills.

Please make these comments part of the hearing's official record.

I have had the opportunity to review the brief language that is proposed for HB 5142 and HB 5259 and was disappointed that this topic has once again been raised in Connecticut. It seems that every several years the legislature considers legislation that would inhibit the rights of people to live happily and productively in the community.

Community Living Arrangements, also commonly referred to as "group homes", generally serve people who require assistance in a number of daily living activities. Group homes usually have six or fewer residents and blend seamlessly into their neighborhoods. In fact, many group homes serve as models for their neighbors since they are so well kept. DDS supports public and private provider group homes throughout the state quite successfully. Group homes for children and adults with intellectual disability do not pose threats to our communities; rather, they provide safe and economical alternatives to the institutional settings that were the warehouse models of the past. We certainly don't want to return to the days when people with disabilities were hidden away and isolated... which is what could happen if future group home development is encumbered with unneeded regulations and endless public hearings.

*It has taken decades to improve the public's perception of people with intellectual disability. People now recognize that everyone has the right to live comfortably and with dignity in our communities. The positive inroads that we as a society have made in accepting differences and challenging stereotypical attitudes should not be jeopardized by this proposed legislation. Therefore, I urge you to not move these two pieces of legislation forward.*

Thank you for understanding my concerns as you address this important issue.

Sincerely,

James W. Heffernan

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