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Good morning. I am here this morning to voice my concerns about the number of proposed bills that are coming before the Committee on Planning and Development in regards to the approval of any new group home within a community.

My son, Andy Puglisi, lives in a group home in Southbury, Connecticut. He has been at his home for the past 10 years.

Notice I said "his home". That is exactly what it is. "I love my home, mom", Andy often tells me. So why should he not live in a home in a beautiful community? He didn't choose to be born with disabilities in fact he said "you know mom, perhaps I could have been a doctor or I would have been a great dad, if I didn't have cerebral palsy and cortical blindness".

Why shouldn't Andy be able to have the opportunity to have a nice yard to sit in on a summer day. Andy loves to sit on the glider and have lemonade in the summer and if you were to visit him he would invite you to do the same. "Don't you just love sitting on the swing mom? Isn't this a nice place to spend a summer afternoon?"

I can go to bed each night knowing Andy is in a safe home, well cared for and part of a community. When he lived at home with me he was in a community and the neighbors loved him so why shouldn't he live in a community now and enjoy the freedom we all have. Andy and the other young men that live in this home are all a family and go about their daily lives like we all do.

In my daughter's home, she and her husband work and their children go to school and play in the yard and have friends over and this is how a home works. It is no different in Andy's home they all work and have their various activities and have dinner together, perhaps watch a little T.V. play a game or just spend time together. This is my son's family and he deserves nothing but the best because he is precious and didn't choose his disabilities but, he has chosen to make the best of what he has. I am so proud of him and the fine young man he has become.

I began this journey with Andy 45 years ago and my goals have never changed. To ensure he has the best quality of care and a home to keep him safe and to give him every opportunity to grow to his highest potential.

Please do not let anyone stand in the way of individuals living in and enjoying a community home setting.

Lois M. Nitch
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