

Testimony of Pam Minicucci
Before the Public Health Committee

On SB 971

February 23, 2011

Good Morning Madam Chair/Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. My name is Pam Minicucci from North Haven and these are my two children Danielle and Gianna. We are here in regards to SB 971 An Act Concerning the rights of persons using assistance dogs in connection with a health condition.

My two daughters represent the many faces of an invisible disability....until it rears it's ugly head in the form of a seizure, a diabetic emergency, cancer, and in my girls case, anaphylaxis, due to food allergies. My daughter Gianna, has been living with her food allergies for her entire 7 years of life. It's severe enough that we went and obtained a Medical Alert Service Dog for her. Her dog is not with her today because she is in the final stages of her scent training in Colorado. This service dog will be able to alert Gianna if any of her life threatening allergens are near by, including instances of cross contaminations. When the service dog alerts her, my daughter will be able to avoid getting herself into an exposure that can cause her death. There would be no need to use her life saving Epi -pen. No trip to the hospital, at least not this time.

To this date, the Town we live in will not accept this type of service dog. We have been denied access into her public school , where her exposures are frequent and range from minor to severe. Exposures and cross contamination are at peak for her during the hours of school. During the week of Valentines, when class room parties were happening, she had 1 known exposure that sent her to the hospital. She had two more exposures that week, although not directly, but still with in her classroom. Had I not been there at those times, it would have resulted in yet 2 more trips to the hospital. Has anyone ever tried to teach a whole school staff including janitors and lunch room personal and other parents and class mates about the importance of avoiding an exposure and how cross contamination is just as deadly as ingestion, or how to instantly recognize the symptoms of anaphylaxis? I have and people still forget. Forget to how to recognize it, and yes sometimes forget how to treat it . I worry everyday while she is at school if my daughter will come home to me the same way I sent her off to school. Children are dying across the country because of exposures to their food allergies and delayed treatment . A couple of businesses, the Police Department and even the Town clerks office refuse to recognize her Medical Alert service dog as a legal service animal. My town we live in and several other towns and cities throughout Connecticut have also denied other people with these types of service dogs. And these towns and cities fail to admit that although there are Federal Laws in place to include these Medical Alert Service Dogs, they don't understand that federal law supersedes the state law. Currently, Connecticut Service Dogs laws are out dated and need to keep up with the changing times. The law only recognizes Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs and service dogs for the mobility impaired. Medical Alert service dogs are still a fairly newer type of service dog, they've been in use for less than 10 years. Connecticut service dog laws need to be amended to include Medical Alert service dogs and for these dogs to be allowed in the same public places as any person and/or service animal, including public schools and the school busses that transport these students.

By having this bill passed, it stops the anger, hurt, embarrassment and discrimination against the handlers of these types of service dogs.

For which we have personally encountered numerous times in our home town of North Haven, CT.

Please consider passing this bill, it really is a matter of life and death.
Thank you

