



February 9, 2011

Testimony before Committee on Public Health
Re: H.B #6279 (Raised), “An Act Concerning Revisions to Statutes to the
Department of Developmental Services including Utilization of Respectful Language
when Referring to Persons with Intellectual Disability”

by
Lynn Warner, Executive Director, The Arc of Connecticut

Senator Stillman, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

I am Lynn Warner, the Executive Director of The Arc of Connecticut, a 59-year-old statewide advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. We have 23 local chapters throughout the State that provide supports, services, and advocacy for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

I am testifying today in strong support of **H.B 6279, “An Act Concerning Revisions to Statutes to the Department of Developmental Services including Utilization of Respectful Language when Referring to Persons with Intellectual Disability”**

The changes outlined in H.B. 6279 will aid the Connecticut statutes that direct the Department of Developmental Services to become more aligned with current respectful language and terminology for the people they support and serve. These changes also mirror the initiatives set forth by the Federal Government. In the fall of 2010, Congress voted to change the wording in health, education, and labor laws related to people with disabilities thereby eliminating disrespectful language and terminology.

On October 5, 2011, President Obama signed this legislation, aptly named Rosa’s Law, for the 9-year old girl with Down syndrome who initiated the lobbying to make respectful language in legislation a reality. Rosa’s Law made parallel respectful language used in the Federal Government with that used by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as the health arm of the United Nations and the White House.

Connecticut will be in very good company if it were to follow these examples. By changing the how we talk about or refer to people with disabilities; we acknowledge that they are in fact people first and equal members of society. They have the right to be treated as such.

On behalf of The Arc of Connecticut, the people we advocate for and their families, I urge you to vote favorably on H.B. 6279.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.