

Testimony Opposing the Merger of OPA and CHRO
February 16, 2012

Good Evening Madam Chair and Committee Members.

My name is Migdalia Rivas, I live in the City of Norwalk, CT and I am here to oppose House Bill 5016 sections 75 thru 82.

As a community activist, a Parent and a leader I can attest to the competency and effectiveness of the Office of Protection and Advocacy.

I know from firsthand experience of the issues. I oppose the consolidation of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities (P&A) with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO).

It will confuse persons with disabilities in Connecticut, but more importantly it would deny people with disabilities an independent safeguard against abuse, neglect and discrimination as well as the right to independent investigations of abuse violations.

Federal law requires that we have an independent protection and advocacy system. The consolidation would eliminate that independence and risk Connecticut's federal funding for P&A as well as the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities and UCONN's Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities.

Please keep P&A an independent safeguard for people with disabilities. They deserve this right. Risking federal funding to the state is a dangerous thing. It is not in the best interest of the families and children with disabilities in our communities and with-in our cultures.

Thank you.
Migdalia Rivas