

Gloria Silva
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My name is Gloria Silva, I work for Abilis, The Birth To Three Program in Stamford CT. I'm a special Education Teacher, and I work with the Latino community. As a service Coordinator my job is to help families find and secure services for their children with disabilities.

The Office of Protection and Advocacy has come to my community to help us give trainings about the special education system. In February, we were able to hold two trainings on Understanding Special Education Services in Spanish. More than 60 people attended the two courses. Many of our Hispanic parents had no idea of their rights and how to navigate the cumbersome special education system. These trainings have empowered families to be the first and best advocates for their own children and to have the confidence to be successful.

During the past year, I have become aware of the great work done by the Office of Protection and Advocacy. They have been a significant tool in the empowering of families of children with disabilities and children themselves.

What are we going to do without this important resource in the community? Are we going to be forced to undertake the role of the legal system, that is already overwhelmed as it is?

The merger of the Office of Protection and Advocacy and The Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities makes no sense. They have two distinct missions and OPA will become subjugated to CHRO which just operates within a legal framework with little knowledge of advocacy of disability empowers.

I hope this honorable committee will consider this bill seriously and stop it right now.