

Georgina Felix
72 Walnut Road - Rocky Hill, CT
H-860-529-0468
O-860-297-4391
parentsopeningdoor@sbcglobal.net

My name is Georgina Felix, and I'm here today to testify and oppose the merging of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A) with the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. Because of the unique and diverse way the Office of Protection and Advocacy operates this proposal would rob Connecticut residents with disabilities and their families of a critically important independent safeguard against abuse, neglect and erosion of rights specially the underserved population of Latinos with disabilities.

I have had the opportunity to get to know the P&A office for over 20 years. As a member, volunteer and one of the founders of one of the non-profit organizations Padres Abriendo Puertas, Inc. or Parents Opening Doors (PAP), I can testify today that we learned that a parent has rights, and the system needs to listen.

P&A gave us the tools and support to learn how to navigate the educational system and how to protect our children rights and to stand for what we believe, that every child with disability deserves the opportunity to be educated with dignity and in an inclusive environment and receive the same opportunities that children without disabilities gets.

I'm proof that ADVOCACY works! I'm a widow, mother of four and my youngest son has disabilities. When I got involved with P&A and PAP my son was 9 years old and he was receiving special education services. After I learned about my rights and the rights that parents have, my son began to receive all services and evaluations needed. Today he is 30 years old, still can't tie his shoes but he knows how to read and write. He also lives independently and works in the volunteer department at Hartford Hospital. He also works in a private doctor's office doing clerical. For the last 20 years, PAP has served as an ambassador in the community and has been delivering training of parental rights under the federal law IDEA to the Latino community in the state.

At the State of the State address Governor Malloy said that he would focus on education reform in 2012. These changes are long overdue, and we commend Governor Malloy for making education reform a top priority. But, I believe that the only agency capable to fight for this reform for children with disabilities, together with the Governor, is the Office of Protection & ADVOCACY for Persons with Disabilities because they are the experts. This population of students receiving special education services is the most affected and discriminated when it comes to public education.

I oppose to the consolidation and weakening of the Office of Protection & ADVOCACY for Persons with Disabilities.

Keep P&A Independent!

Thank you.