March 4, 2012

Appropriation Committee Members
LOB
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: House Bill 5016 – Consolidation of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (OPA)

Dear Committee Members:

I am writing to express my concerns over the proposed consolidation of the OPA with CHRO or any other agency, jeopardizing the OPA's independence. I am unable to attend as I have suffered a stroke and ambulation is difficult at this time and I cannot attend on Thursday.

I ask you to please vote **NO** on this part of bill 5016. OPA provides independent investigations that protect the lives and welfare of individuals with intellectual disabilities. Who is going to protect these individuals? What agency is going to come and answer the call when our most vulnerable citizens need an independent investigation, a person to protect them? And, lastly, what is to be gained by consolidating this agency? Really ... what is to be gained? A campaign promise is kept, at whose expense and for what good reason?

The administration wants to streamline government by merging agencies. I'm certainly not against economies being sought; but, at what cost? The loss of 2.5 million in federal funds is no small matter? Can the state really stand to lose those monies specifically earmarked to assist and protect persons with disabilities? I'm asking you to look at all the data available on the proposed consolidation and weigh the consequences of such a rash decision.

I trust that you will do the right thing following careful deliberation, as elected officials who have a duty to protect those that have voted you into office and those unable to voice their concerns. Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Pat Woodall

Patricia Woodall
Newington, Connecticut