

Testimony for Public Hearing  
Appropriations Committee  
March 8, 2012  
HB 5016  
Jennifer Henry  
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Hartford, CT 06105

Good Afternoon Appropriations Committee members. My name is Jennifer Henry and I am an employee at Advocacy Unlimited. I am also a member of the council of Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness. I am here today to ask you to not merge the Office of Protection and Advocacy with any other state agency such as CHRO.

At Advocacy Unlimited we advocate for people with mental illness by trying to find resources for them with issues they are having. OP&A in particular the PAIMI council takes over where we leave off. OP&A serves many clients around Connecticut and is a vital source in our community.

If we merge OP&A with another agency we will lose the authenticity of what OP&A stands for. OP&A represents children and adults with mental illness who are being mistreated by the system. They offer a fair and objective assistance in dealing with people who with mental illness are being abused.

By merging OP&A they will lose its independence to act on behalf of the client. The merger would mean OP&A will have to answer to a new agency head over both agencies. This would lead to the loss of OP&A being able to implement its own decisions leaving the welfare of the client also at a loss.

I am urging you to keep OP&A as a separate agency in order to serve our clients better, save funding, and allow the system to operate more efficiently overall.

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Henry