

**Brenetta Henry  
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Dear Legislators of the State Of Connecticut

First I would like to thank you for taking the time to hear my story. I'm here to speak on behalf of House Bill 5016 proposed to Consolidate the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities and the Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities forming a new agency to be called the Department of Human Rights, Protection and Advocacy. My name is Brenetta Henry and I am a mother of 4 and a Grandmother of 5. I would like for you to know the importance of keeping the Office of Protection and Advocacy Independent and in the community, because had it not been for the move to the Office of Protection and Advocacy I would have never been given the resources and received the help I needed for not 1 but 2 of my children. My youngest son has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and had many difficulties with school, from being continuously suspended repeatedly, restrained, the school wasn't in compliance with his IEP. The P&A Staff was there to assist in his Due Process Hearing which was a success. My older son who suffers from Schizophrenia and continuously cycling thru the Department of Correction because transition services were not in place. Upon his release from incarceration it was Office of Protection and Advocacy that helped to connect me with the proper resources. It's bad enough that families living in the Urban communities aren't getting information about systems and services that are available to assist them in things that some people take for granted. Just think of what life is like for a family who has children suffering with multiple disabilities that doesn't have the means to fight for their rights. It is so important that OPA stays intact and remains independent so Family Organizations such as AFCAMP and PADRES that are in the communities continue helping these families to be educated and empowered.

Remember these families are also your supporters and expect you to be their voice in changes being made in the state. I support and Highly recommend that Office of Protection and Advocacy remains at its present location as an independent advocacy agency for persons with disabilities.