

Testimony of Walter L. Glomb to the Appropriations Committee
on February 16, 2012,
Regarding the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities.

Good afternoon members of the committee.

My name is Walter Glomb and I am a parent of a young adult who has Down syndrome.

I am here to voice my opposition to the dilution of authority that is proposed for the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities.

The Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities operates under a number of distinct federal mandates including the protection and advocacy system of the federal Developmental Disabilities Act.

One purpose of a protection and advocacy system is to take legal action against state or local government when necessary to enforce federal civil rights law such as the ADA or the IDEA. In fact, this role of P&A was recently highlighted in a letter from the Governor's new ADA coordinator.

Imbedding P&A more deeply in the state bureaucracy would compromise the ability of a protection and advocacy system to challenge violations by state and local government.

I understand that the purpose of the proposed merger is to save money, so I would like to propose an alternative that I believe would make P&A more independent and reduce its cost.

Privatize the Office of Protection and Advocacy.

This is the way in most other states. In most other states, the protection and advocacy system is organized as a private, non-profit entity.

A private P&A would have the independence required to challenge state and local government. It would also cost less to operate.

The Program Review and Investigations Committee recently reported that the private sector is much more efficient than the State in delivering services to individuals who have developmental disabilities.

Over the past three decades, individuals and private nonprofit organizations have spent millions of dollars (Yes, millions.) of private funds in hearings and litigation to enforce our rights and improve the lives of individuals who live with developmental disabilities. For examples I point to the hundreds of local special education hearings that are regularly required to gain access to a free and appropriate public education and to the successful federal class action lawsuits regarding Mansfield Training School, Southbury Training School, special education and the waiting lists for residential services.

I imagine that Connecticut could save much more if this function were managed by a private nonprofit under the direction of a board comprised individuals with developmental disabilities and their family members.

Thank you.