



764-A Campbell Ave.
West Haven, CT 06516
Voice: 203-934-7077
Fax: 203-934-7078
www.cdr-ct.org
www.wheel-a-thon.org

**Testimony of
Marc Anthony Gallucci, Esq.
Appropriations Committee – March 8, 2012
HB5016**

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

Today I am testifying both as the Executive Director of Center for Disability Rights and as an Officer of the Connecticut Association of Centers for Independent Living. We are strongly opposed to the proposed merger of Protection & Advocacy with CHRO, and we are also opposed to an alternative merger with the Governmental Accountability Office.

At CDR and CACIL, we are all for sensible consolidation of State Government that will result in reduced redundancy and bureaucracy and provide for more consumer friendly and efficient services. This proposal does nothing of the sort and will actually cause Connecticut many legal and ethical problems while putting the services of Protection & Advocacy at jeopardy of losing its federal funding stream. We cannot emphasize in the strongest terms how inappropriate this proposed merger is for everyone involved.

First, a disclosure ... Protection & Advocacy is the legal watchdog of my Center and all the other CILs as well. If a consumer has a grievance with us that cannot be resolved, they would address that grievance with the CAPs program at P&A;

Second, the proposed merger would merge an advocacy/watchdog agency with a neutral quasi-judicial body. In fact, both P&A and CT's CILs advocate with consumers and bring matters to CHRO for resolution. There is an obvious conflict of interest in having the advocates for people with disabilities joined to CHRO. No one would ever again trust the impartiality of CHRO; not would consumers trust the impartiality and independence of P&A;

Third, this consolidation would not consolidate similar governmental missions or tasks; but rather would combine different ones. This would also be the case if the merger were to be with Governmental accountability;

Fourth, Federal Laws enabling various watchdog programs at P&A require independence and freedom from any State Governmental control. This merger would put CT in direct violation of these Federal mandates; and,

Fifth, this merger or consolidation would actually trigger what is called a re-designation or re-assignment of P&A's status as the State's designated agency for various protection and watchdog programs. This would result in a lengthy process that could take a year or more, and it would waste a lot of State funds and staff time and energy while the re-designation is attempted. Not to mention that the Federal funding would be held up that whole time, hurting the consumers who need P&A's protection. And guess what? We are certain that the Feds will ultimately deny the re-designation, and CT will have to start all over again.

This proposed merger is unwise, not well thought out, and will cause much disruption and waste a lot of time and money. Not only will there be no benefit to it, but it will actually hurt the State, P&A, and the vulnerable citizens with disabilities that rely on an independent P&A.

Thank you for your attention.

Marc Anthony Gallucci, Esq.