

Bruce Garrison/testimony on March 13, 2012

Thank you for allowing me to comment on Bill 5433.

Edward Garrison after flying his twenty five missions as a tail gunner on a B-17 became Chaplin's town selectmen for twenty years. He died in office. He took us kids to a session of the legislature and told us the legislature is a place where they make laws. Uncle Ed said that sometimes it was as scary a place as waiting for the flak to explode around him over the skies of Germany. **We are fearful today.**

This bill unless the legislature decides to the contrary will be effective this July.

The costs associated with the establishment of a Council, maintenance of a registry, binding arbitration, interagency cooperation, and a grievance process will be funded at the expense of my daughter's budget now provided for by a state authored waiver. The state working with the federal government decided to resolve the problem of hundreds of our family members placed on waiting lists, waiting for services that would not be available until sometime off in the distant future. **We watched with great anxiety while they waited at home or in the institution to begin living their lives.** Then the waiver came and its valuable resources for which families fought for, **every penny**, gave our children the right to join as citizens in communities across this great state. **Now we are faced with a challenge** to these opportunities for our children. Now what has been working isn't going to happen that way anymore. Now we face the claim that we do not provide good working conditions, we do not offer decent pay, we do not know how to teach service workers about our children and we do not support their needs with the resources we have been given. We are not good stewards of this money; we need a union. We need a union under this bill to do a list of duties already performed by consumers and surrogates. **Again, this structure already exists** and is performed by consumers or their surrogates consistent with self-determination

principles, directed by families, and through agreements with service providers. A new feature has now been added: union dues and fees. We are *not* the company, we do *not* want a profit, we do *not* want to get fat from our largesse, *nor* do we want to oppress the workers we are so fortunate to have in our children's lives.

So what is this about? Where is the money going to come from? Can we be assured by SEIU promising us; "Don't worry about it-we'll take care of it?" The fact of the matter is if they don't take care of it we will still be paying union dues. **I submit with all due respect** that the purpose of this Bill is to **enlarge** the revenue base of SEIU because as we know membership equals dues and dues equal power. We have been told by SEIU how much influence they have over the Legislature and the Office of the Governor. They say they are listened to because of their efforts at election time. They will speak for the worker. **But** who will speak for my daughter? Who will speak for those whose only opportunity and means to participate as citizens is dependent on every penny of their individual budgets. How will their vote count? Who will speak for them?

If the worker's pay comes from wages earned and those wages pay for union dues, do workers get less net pay as a result or more pay needed to pay for those dues? Will funding and services continue at the same level? Where does the money come from? How much less of these hard fought for funds will families and their surrogates have in order to budget for their children's actual support? **I submit it has to come** from my daughter's budget funded by the Medicaid Waiver.

These are Medicaid reimbursement monies to the state. We pay 50 cents for every Medicaid dollar provided. How will unionization of my daughter's support staff affect the budgets of DSS and DDS on an annual basis? If Medicaid monies and state dollars (which) go into the total budget for providing waiver services now

have to pay union dues and fees, *then how will the State maintain the current funding levels?* Has anybody crunched the numbers on this bill? It has to come from somewhere. Do taxpayers have to shovel more money into the general treasury to meet this obligation?

The final section of this Bill talks plainly that in order to effectuate its provisions “the Commissioners of Social Services and Developmental Services and any other department or agency of the state shall take all actions reasonably necessary to obtain approval for any such waiver and to ensure the continuation of necessary federal funding”.

Is it any wonder that families and their surrogates when they are told on an annual basis that that’s all there is to help your family, now stand against how their resources are going to be reallocated? The state will be required to raise more money for the Union that instead could have been raised for consumers, their surrogates and those who work for them. Does the Union have more influence to get the government to spend more on the union but not consumers and their surrogates? **What’s the rush for this bill?** Why haven’t we been invited to the table? Is it not in our interest to look after the welfare of those who serve our families? In fact for many of them, they will make less money once they are unionized. What’s the rush? Can’t we all sit down to and look at this together. Come let us reason together. There is an old Amish saying: “The hurrieder we go, the behinder we get.”

Finally, this bill obligates the state to ensure that waiver funding meets the needs of the Union contract and those they represent rather than those who are served. This is under the pretense that there will not be any reduction in consumer services and budgets. If the cost of this is not borne by the State directly then it must be charged

to the waiver. The legislature will then be given the ignoble task of robbing the poor to pay the rich. In any time in history that has always been bad policy. **Thank you for your time.**