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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 to the Appropriations Committee about The Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (P&A) and the importance of fully funding all 31 positions listed in the budget. My name is Brenetta Henry and I am a mother of 4 and a Grandmother of 6. I would like for you to know the importance of P&A because had it not been for the Agency I would have never been given the Support and Resources I received when needing help for not 1 but 2 of my children. My youngest son who has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder had many difficulties with school. When his school was in non-compliance with his Individualized Education Plan P&A Staff was there to assist in his Due Process Hearing which was a success and my son was able to get an appropriate education and graduate high school. I do not believe any of this would have been possible without the assistance of The Office of Protection and Advocacy. My older son suffers from Schizophrenia and is continuously cycling through The Department of Corrections because of transition Services not being in place. Upon his release from incarceration, it was The Office of Protection and Advocacy that helped to connect me with the proper resources. It is bad enough that families living in urban communities are not receiving information about systems and services that are available to assist them with things that some people take for granted. Please think of what life is like for a family who has children suffering from multiple disabilities that does not have the means to fight for their rights. It is important that P&A stay funded to continue the great support and assistance they are giving to families like mine, who could not access services or obtain options and resources. Remember these families are also your supports and expect you to be their voice.