

Written

March 11, 2013

TO: The Government Administration and Elections Committee

RE: Proposed S.B. No. 761 AN ACT MAKING THE JANITORIAL WORK PILOT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY OR A DISADVANTAGE PERMANENT.

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Ron Bourque, and I am the Vocational Rehabilitation Director at the Easter Seal Rehabilitation Center of Greater Waterbury. The Janitorial Work Pilot Program has provided gainful employment for Easter Seal individuals with disabilities for over twenty (20) years. Our organization strongly supports and endorses making this program PERMANENT, as it continues to provide significant community based employment jobs for persons with disabilities. In past years, we have seen the Work Pilot Program come up for renewal every three (3) years, and although we are extremely grateful for its continued renewal, a cloud of angst, uncertainty and trepidation exists each and every time that the program comes up for renewal.

Through our employment programs at Easter Seals, we provide vocational training and community employment opportunities to four hundred (400) individuals per year. Our workforce is comprised almost exclusively of individuals with intellectual disabilities, as well as other disabling conditions. Eighty-three (83) of our workers with intellectual disabilities are currently thriving, growing and increasing their independence due to the numerous employment opportunities being made available through the Qualified Partnership Program. The reach of this program is broad, extending throughout the entire state, generating significant positive outcomes to numerous persons with disabilities. For all involved workers across the State, their respective jobs represent their individual identities; they talk of their jobs with great pride and passion, and they are eager to expand their capacities as contributing citizens of Connecticut, Maximizing their full inclusion and participation at the workplace is an incredible outcome of this program.

The scope of the janitorial pilot and the outcomes that it generates for the State of Connecticut are significant and noteworthy, not only from a worker perspective, but also from a cost effective perspective. Services provided through this program are generated at fair market value, with services aligned to facility standards identified by the state. With regard to scope of work hours generated by the program, a total of 38,000 work hours for persons with disabilities for Easter Seal workers were realized in FY-12. Worker wages of \$335,000 were earned, again with a high quality standards being maintained at State of Connecticut facilities.

Our workers and our organization strongly endorse S.B. No. 761, and are eager to have this bill authorized on a PERMANENT basis. We believe that workers with disabilities, working under this program in our state, have established a proven track record of excellent performance, and that they have repeatedly demonstrated the capacity to get the job done to the state's exacting standards.

Workers with disabilities desire to continue to make positive contributions in their communities and throughout the state of Connecticut, and the Janitorial Work Pilot Program has proven itself to be an excellent vehicle to full inclusion of persons with disabilities into the workforce. We thank the committee for giving this bill your full consideration.