

Honorable Members of the Public Health Committee of CT,

Testimony of ...

I am submitting testimony to urge your support of Senate Bill 129 with an amendment to open Southbury Training School (STS) to new admissions.

STS is a critical part of Connecticut's care system for the intellectually and developmentally disabled(IDD). There is no other service provider in the state that offers this level of accountable, consistent, diversified, and comprehensive care for this population.

My Aunt, Mary Petruzzi, has been a resident since 1962. I am writing on her behalf as her guardian, and as an advocate for all STS residents and their families. We need choice. STS offers a choice to those who may need residential treatment in a safe environment with exceptional quality of care and staff.

As it stands now, STS is the premier ICF care center for profoundly and severely IDD geriatric adults in the state, if not the country. STS offers an array of services that are crucial to the well-being of this population. They include 24/7 on-site medical staff, a health care unit, staff psychiatrists, and dental clinic. These same services are often fraught with discrimination and bias in the general population.

STS is poised to be a world class service provider for specialized medical services for IDD individuals throughout the state. Ideally STS could be a consortium of medical specialists and experts that provide the best tested techniques and practices for this very unique and sensitive population.

Our community is dependent on the existence of STS for innumerable economic and cultural associations. STS greatly impacts our region. It is the heart and soul of our community and surrounding towns and cities. We look forward to reinventing STS to rise to new challenges of today's healthcare system, while leveraging the best practices and capital knowledge brought from her experience.

STS and CT pioneered exceptional care for IDD individuals when it was built in the 1940's. Since then, it has contributed to the economic success, demographics, infrastructure and development of the communities around it. It needs to remain a focal point of exceptional care for the IDD population in our state, whether as a community service provider, or residential service provider or both. To do that we must open it's doors. This would take a minimal investment when all costs are taken into account.

The DDS system also needs a balanced system. To rely on the private sector, with an inadequate and flawed system for accountability and quality control is reprehensible. We all know there are problems, but STS offers a standard of care that is measurable, attainable, and should continue to set the bar for all others, inside and outside STS. Ideally, STS could be a Community Care Campus, a place to set and hold the highest standards of care; first for our geriatric IDD citizens, then for emergency list individuals and their families, as well as other populations at risk, i.e. autistic spectrum.

On another note, STS is ideally situated as an incubator for new approaches towards the care and concerns facing the IDD population in the 21st century. An example might be community integration activities, be it exercise classes, college courses, cultural arts courses, theater performances, movies etc...The possibilities are limitless!

I urge your support for our proposal to amend Senate Bill 129, which is currently before your committee, with language to reopen the Southbury Training School ("STS") to new admissions.

Thank you for your consideration, time and thought to this extremely important issue,
Sincerely,

Judith Petrovich