

Public Health Committee

Re: Support of Senate Bill 129 – An Act concerning The Hartford Regional Center Operated by the Department of Developmental Services

Public Hearing Date: February 27, 2013

My name is Kathy O'Toole Tetreault and I am writing (along with my daughter, Kathleen Tetreault) in support of SB 129, which opposes the closing of my brother's home. The house slated for closure is a beautiful Colonial on a quiet road. It has an expansive front yard, and a porch swing that sits between two trees. This home is at once indistinguishable and unique; it is just like any other home that you or I may live in – but to my brother, it is *his* home, unlike any other and impossible to replace.

My brother, Danny O'Toole, is a 55-year-old man who has lived in this home for more than 20 years. Even before moving into this house, my brother has lived in other buildings on the Hartford Regional Center grounds. For 46 years of his life, he has lived with the same four individuals who have become his brothers and sisters. He has been assisted by the same staff members, who have become his surrogate parents. He has his own room, and his own routine. And he is happy.

Although my brother has never spoken and has the cognitive level of a two-year-old, it is clear that he loves his home and those in it. On those occasions that I am with him walking toward his front door, he approaches with haste and is greeted with affection. I am comforted to know that he is in such good care, especially since Danny does not speak, and only those who truly know him are able to ascertain if he is ill, upset, or in pain.

If the state closes Danny's home, he will lose his brothers and sisters, his surrogate parents, his room, and his routine. I will lose the knowledge that my brother is in the hands of those who not only know him, but who love him like their son.

The state can quote as many "success stories" as it pleases of individuals who have adjusted to life in new group homes. But these stories cannot be used as tea leaves to predict how my brother will adapt. Nor do these stories account for the physical and emotional costs paid by these individuals, and their families, before they finally "adjust." Instead of focusing on studies and statistics, I ask that you think of my brother – a man who simply wants to go to *his* home each night, just like you and I.

I implore you to act with empathy, and to vote for the passage of SB 129.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathy O'Toole Tetreault

Kathleen Tetreault

