

Lauralyn Lewis

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Re: **H.B. No. 5534** – An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

Today I ask the legislators on the Public Health Committee to support HB-5534. My son is twenty-two and has Down syndrome; he is a client of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Last year no other social service agency suffered the cuts that DDS did. It is a moral obligation that the state of Connecticut has to care for this segment of the population, a too often invisible population.

There are currently over 3500 individuals on the combined waiting and planning lists for DDS. My son is considered a Priority 2 (P2) which means he would require a residential placement within two – five years. He has been a P2 for over two years now. Currently, there are families that have been on the P1 list (placement within a year) that have been waiting for that much needed placement for ten years. If this system were properly funded many of the 3500 would now be served. DDS was formerly known as the Department of Mental Retardation and during those years many parents were told that when the time came, they would be there to help, myself included. These same parents are now being told the only hope they have of getting a residential placement is in the event of the parents' death. We have many aging parents and single parents caring for these individuals and this is their greatest concern. I lost my husband to cancer when my son was little and I share that concern.

The developmentally disabled, under the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), get educated in their home towns and then they go off a cliff at age twenty-one when DDS becomes responsible for them. Those with developmental disabilities have varying needs. There is no one size fits all answer for this population. They require an array of services to meet their needs. This bill would provide the array of services to those who are eligible and have been waiting for help.

Our children are not numbers and it is important to remember the real cost of the decisions you make here. We need help to transition our children to housing, whether it is creative or a group home long before we die as this transition will be a long one. Very few of us have the resources to place our children in settings where they can thrive or be cared for. As a society we moved away from institutions because of the inhumane conditions. What we face today is also inhumane and it is immoral. I implore you to provide for those that cannot provide for themselves by supporting this bill.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauralyn Lewis