

**Testimony: H.B. No.5534 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PROVISION OF SERVICES
TO INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

My name is Ronald Langner. I am 73 years old and I am from Tolland. I am testifying in support of Bill No. 5534 because of its importance to families who have family members with intellectual disabilities. The biggest fear that aging parents, like myself, have is that they do not know what will happen to their loved ones once they are unable to care for them. My wife and I have a 27 year old son, Scott, who is autistic, has epilepsy and is developmentally disabled. Scott has been a DDS client since he was 10 years old, and when he was 18 his name was added to the waiting list for housing supports. Scott is now 27 and is still living with us. This present situation is a result of both a change in the philosophy of DDS with regards to residential supports and funding reductions to the DDS budget. Philosophically DDS has moved to implementing a more person-centered approach to residential supports and as a result DDS is no longer placing individuals into institutional environments, such as the facility in Southbury. And this is a good thing. However, since the institutional environments are still operational they utilize a significant portion of the DDS residential support budget. When this is combined with the reductions in the DDS budget over the past few years, funding to provide newer person-centered residential supports for young adults like Scott, are non-existent. This has resulted in DDS adopting the now existing policy that clients will have to remain in their family home unless and until there is an emergency, like the critical illness or deaths of the parents. DDS would then view my son's situation as an EMERGENCY placement which would result in Scott being moved out of his home and placed somewhere not his choosing and completely new to him. This is not humane or logical – this is just wrong.

This bill is important for two reasons. First and foremost, it would require DDS to develop a plan in a timely manner which will provide the many needed and humane services which are presently not available. In addition, the requirement that the planning be in consultation with the various stakeholders, such as parents and providers, should greatly improve the stated goals of the bill. It is very important that final plan address the real needs and concerns of both the recipients of services, as well those who will provide the services. The plan would also require public visibility which is vitally important to the peace of mind of parents trying to plan for the care of their children. The second and equally important reason I support this bill is that it will to some extent remove the DDS agency from the political arena. The Commissioner of DDS is an appointee of the Governor. A change in Governor with a resulting change in Commissioner could result in a change in agency philosophy, causing delays or changes in the types of support, regardless of what parents have been promised. Bill 5534 would hopefully require the continuation of planning to provide required services in a timely manner, even if a change in Commissioner were to occur.

Bill 5534 will help to facilitate the changes which are necessary for individuals like Scott to realize their hopes and dreams. Forcing them into an emergency placement upon the death of a parent is inhumane. Please do not let them down.

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