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Good Afternoon. I speak to you today on both a professional and personal basis. I am Director of Student Services at UConn Law School and also their Disability Services Coordinator, I have been in Disability Services in higher education for 35 years. I am also Assistant Clinical Professor at the Yale Child Study Center working with college students on the autism spectrum. For 15 years I have been the director of College Autism Spectrum, an organization providing services and training to students, families and the colleges and professionals who serve them. I speak and train professionals all over the country and internationally on improving outcomes for college students with autism. I have started and consulted on many college programs for this specific population of students and began our own program at UConn, formerly the SEAD program, now Beyond Access.

With this background you can imagine how difficult it is for me to see states like Missouri and Alabama, not necessarily known for their progressive educational thinking, to have quickly moved beyond Connecticut in educating their citizenry on the autism spectrum. We in CT are now 48th or 49th in the country in what we offer for Post-Secondary options for the population of students we are addressing today.

Every suggestion or innovative program that I have proposed in CT has been shot down, only to be implemented by another state where I work and watch their students improve and graduate, many even getting jobs. The program I started at UConn was initially refused and I had to go to the University of Minnesota, where their President said, "when the first person with Autism accepts a Nobel prize, and they will, I want them to be an alumnae from the University of Minnesota." What progressive thinking, that was 7 years before I was allowed to bring the same program to UConn.

The majority of our students on the autism spectrum attend community colleges. The average community college in this country has between 50 and 100 students on the spectrum registered and working with their disability services offices. Many have specialized programs for this population. In CT on one school, Gateway community college, has a specialized program and theirs started as an 18 to 21 year old transition program (which is still running) funded by the school districts. Our community colleges are under staffed in disability services and therefore cannot provide the services our CT students with autism need on order to successfully complete a degree.

I could continue with the Bureau of labor statistics and their predictions for our young people the next 20 years and the characteristics of these jobs for our citizens on the spectrum without college degrees. However, I must use the remainder of the 3 minutes to discuss my involvement in this area personally.

My husband and I have 3 children and are a Fragile X Family. Fragile X is the most common form of inherited autism. Our youngest, Max, is 22, he is severely autistic and intellectually disabled. He graduated from River Street School in Windsor in 2013 and has fallen off the proverbial cliff into the world of CT adult services. I visited about every adult services program within a reasonable travel distance to search for an appropriate placement. What I found was horrifying. After West Hartford and River Street had spent 21 years educating our son and spending over a million dollars on him in the process, the programs Max was eligible for were glorified babysitting at best and risks to health and safety at worst. I saw programs with barbed wire, rooms full of older people with disabilities in front of televisions all day. Programs that drove clients around in vans all day calling it "community interaction." Fortunately we found a wonderful program in Bristol (Bristol Adult Resources Center) who accepted our son. They not only have a great program in Bristol but the town gave BARC the Business of the Year award for their innovative businesses employing our adults with disabilities. However, this is not the norm.

Residential services were another issue completely. Our son lived in a River St. Group home for several years before graduating. Though we started two years before he graduated, DDS was unable to find a placement for him. Our journey has been heart wrenching and grueling and no family, especially one working so hard to support their son with autism, should have to go through this.

We finally, after 2 years of searching, had to purchase a house and find an agency willing to run the group home for our son and two other young people. The process was cruel and discriminatory. DDS listened to our difficulties but was little help in the process. Our son has been in adult services for 15 months and we still have no adult case manager through DDS. I have been told repeatedly that his former case manager has not had the time to transfer our son's file to the adult case manager. My husband and I are both educated professionals and we cannot make the CT system of adult services work for our son. What is happening to the single parents, non-English speakers and those overwhelmed by working and caring for their adult children on the spectrum. I implore you to look at the alternatives presented to improve adult services.