

Lauralyn Lewis

Old Lyme, CT

Re: SB 1088

Public Health Committee Members,

March 18, 2015

As a mother of a twenty-three year old young man who has Down syndrome, I write this testimony in support of SB 1088 AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY. My son is the product of Birth to Three and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. My son was one of the first in his kindergarten class to read and is now able to live independently with supports. None of this came easily, but with time, hard work and funding for the aforementioned, my son is a success story. While my son represents only a fraction of those with intellectual disabilities, I feel compelled to address this bill and ask for your support of it.

In the 1950's Nobel Peace Prize Winner Pearl S. Buck wrote in favor of institutions while her daughter was a resident of the institution in Vineland, New Jersey. That same decade Dale Evans wrote against institutionalization as her severely disabled child was kept at home. These examples demonstrate the need for an array of services for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD); one size does not fit all. However, institutionalization is an antiquated system that has seen its day and has no place in the present or future repertoire of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). We have come far in terms of programs to give our individuals with IDD a strong start, but we still have an extremely inequitable and antiquated system to provide for those who are clients of DDS and far too many are not being served. It is time to bring all the services of DDS into the twenty-first century. As the state is mindful of respectful terminology regarding the IDD population, so too should it address and respect their civil rights.

Surely there are savings to be had by closing the costly and outdated models of support. If so, it is unconscionable to allow the more than two thousand individuals to remain on the DDS waiting list. We have seen the success stories of those Southbury residents who have moved to appropriate community based settings. It can be done. Though not a Southbury resident, my son moved out of my home, the only home he knew for nineteen years and learned to navigate a full life in the urban community he calls home. My son is happy, social and has thrived in his independent life. As most young men his age, he has no interest in living at home with his mother now that he has experienced independence. With proper support through the transition process, all individuals with IDD can adjust and thrive in more humane settings. They all deserve that opportunity. Thank you.

Respectfully submitted,

Lauralyn Lewis