

I would like to thank Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to speak to you tonight. My name is Ronald Langner. I live in Tolland with my wife Collette, and our 28-year-old son, Scott., who is a DDS Client. I want to speak in support of Senate Bill 1088.

In 1986 DDS closed admission to Southbury Training School (STS) because they recognized that individuals with developmental disabilities should live in the community and not in isolated institutions such as (STS).

No time table for closure was ever established and 29 years later STS is still functioning and is still draining resources from other programs within DDS. Over the past 29 years, many STS residents have moved from STS into the community. These transitions appear to be successful since no guardians have requested that their wards be removed from their new community home and returned to STS.

In November of 2014 319 individuals still lived at STS. Of these some are in the process of moving to a community setting. There is however a small number of guardians who are opposed to community transition, even though it has been determined that in almost all cases their wards could safely be supported in the community. The main reason for this opposition was not medical but rather it was that they were satisfied with the life at STS and simply did not want to change.

As of the past year it cost approximately 91 million to care for 319 individuals at STS as of November 2014. As a comparison, in 2014, 4 million dollars were allocated for 6 months of new residential services. Annualized this would be 8 million dollars per year. DDS has reported that at least 100 individuals would be placed in community settings as a result of the 8 million dollars. This simple comparison clearly demonstrates that there are significant financial savings to be gained by closing STS.

If no time table for closure is established and individuals who are unwilling to transfer to the community are allowed to die in place it could take another 29 years before STS is closed. This would result in many millions of dollars being diverted from funding for individuals waiting for residential services. This is not unrealistic since the youngest person at STS is only 47 years old.

There are at least 2000 DDS clients waiting for residential services and this list will continue to grow the longer STS is allowed to stay open. Other DDS programs which have been proven to be effective and economical are also being underfunded as a result of the exorbitant costs associated with operating STS.

For example there is no money in the proposed budget for employment support of individuals graduating from school after this year. Another example is that the voluntary services program has been severely cut.

The settlement agreement approved by the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut in the case of *Messier vs. Southbury Training School* does not prohibit the closure of STS. As described in the 11/4/2014 Special Report of the Remedial Expert, who is overseeing the agreement “there are a number of compelling reasons for the state of Connecticut to **now** consider a carefully planned process for the closure of STS”

Some have suggested that the closing of STS would represent inhumane treatment of STS residents. The existing facts do not support this accusation. Unless, the State and DDS are forced to develop a reasonable plan for closure of STS the actual closure of STS will quite possibly drag on for years. This would truly be inhumane