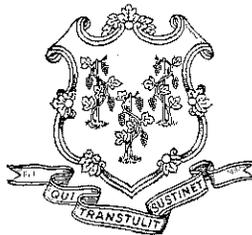


SENATOR BETH BYE
Fifth District

Legislative Office Building
Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106-1591
Tel. 860-240-0428
www.SenatorBye.cga.ct.gov



State of Connecticut
SENATE

Chair
Appropriations Committee

Vice Chair
Childrens Committee

Member
Education Committee
Judiciary Committee
Legislative Management Committee

March 18, 2015

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Public Health
RE: S.B. No. 1088 An Act Concerning Services For Individuals With Intellectual Disability**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan, and members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is Beth Bye, State Senator representing the Fifth District Towns of Bloomfield, Burlington, Farmington, and West Hartford.

I am here today to speak in support of SB 1088, An Act Concerning Services for Individuals with Intellectual Disability.

Over the past two years, I have had the honor of working with Representatives Hampton and Case to organize the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Caucus (I/DD). It is the first of its kind in the nation and we have over sixty members as of today. The Caucus has been studying issues related to the I/DD community and how our legislature can support individuals and families coping with the challenges that come along with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

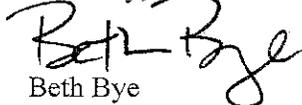
The bill before you is very important because it pushes our state to plan for the closing of Southbury Training School, as agreed to in *Messier v. Southbury Training School*, in a timely manner. Furthermore, this bill first and foremost considers the needs of the individual—which is crucial to successful closing of Southbury. Lastly, this bill requires a plan for the facility and property's environmental impact, as well as an analysis of both costs and savings.

An issue that is intended to be included in this bill, and could be more clearly written, is that any analysis needs to include a plan that accounts for a living wage for people working with individuals with disabilities. Right now, our non-profits have been consistently shortchanged by state reimbursement levels. This has resulted in low wages for our workers. Families, unions, and non-profits all agree: workers need to be paid a living wage. As you work on the final language for this bill, please be sure that this goal is very clear. If we close Southbury, with the objective of serving more families, we have to assure that the statute considers fair wages for people doing this important work.

It is critical that we get this shift in care right. We have failed before, and we cannot fail our residents, our communities, or our hard working caregivers (both parents and workers) again.

Thank you for raising this bill, and I am happy to answer questions you may have.

Sincerely,


Beth Bye