



My name is Fred Stula and I am the Director of Government Advocacy & Community Affairs for HARC, Inc. I am submitting testimony on behalf of HARC for the Planning & Development Committee Public Hearing on Friday, February 13, 2015. If there are questions regarding by testimony please contact me at 860-218-6089 or fstula@harc-ct.org.

HARC is a community-based nonprofit organization in Hartford funded through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). It was founded in 1951 and helps over 2,200 people with intellectual disability and their families. HARC is a major provider of clinical and supportive programs that span the entire lifetime: early intervention (Birth-to-Three), family support, respite care, employment and day services, residential, recreation, behavioral health and elderly services. HARC is part of the Safety Net and a partner with the State of Connecticut in providing cost-effective services to individuals with intellectual disability and their families.

HARC operates 11 group homes, condominiums and individual residential support settings for 58 individuals with intellectual disability throughout greater Hartford to address one of our families' greatest concerns, "Where will my child live when it's time for the next step of independence?" HARC works with the entire family in determining a vision for the future and assists with the emotional and practical issues associated with making a successful transition. Our family-style culture promotes respect, dignity, self-determination and competence. HARC takes great pride in the appearance of our residences, has highly trained onsite staff and is committed to being a positive influence and active member in the community.

HARC's residential facilities are not operated by the state and will not be impacted by the recommendations in HB 5618- An Act Concerning Community-Based Residential Facilities. However, for individuals with intellectual disability, community-based living is a key component to independence and we should not implement more obstacles to establishing group homes for them. Individuals with intellectual disability have only had the right to choose to live in the community since 1999 (*Olmstead v. L.C.*).

When HARC establishes a new community-based group home many factors are considered a few are; price, location, job opportunities, public transportation and where the future residents' families reside. **HB 6483- An Act Establishing A Task Force To Study Group Home Distribution** will identify where group homes are located but additional information may be required to fully comprehend why some areas have higher concentrations. **This bill will not impact HARC's current group homes but, may impact the locations of where future facilities are established.**