



**Testimony to the Public Health Committee  
March 4th, 2015  
By Leslie Simoes, Executive Director, The Arc Connecticut**

**[Testimony: SB918, An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities.](#)**

Thank you Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to testify this afternoon on [SB 918 An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities](#)

My Name is Leslie Simoes and I am the executive director of The Arc Connecticut. The Arc is a 62-year old advocacy organization committed to protecting the basic civil basic rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to promoting opportunities for their full inclusion in the life of their communities. We have 18 chapters throughout Connecticut providing direct support and services. We rose from family grass roots advocacy and have hundreds of families and individuals with disabilities actively involved in our Arc family.

SB918 has 3 sections and I will address each section independently, but before I do, I just want to thank the committee for raising such an ambitious bill and I know that the best intentions of the committee are to help individuals with I/DD and their families across the state. **Part A** recommends developing a plan in conjunction with stakeholders to ensure that each person with intellectual disability who is eligible to receive services from the department, including an individual currently on a waiting list to receive services from the department, receives such services not later than July 1, 2017. While planning is something the system presently lacks, I am not sure that the ambitious timeframe to be completed by July 2017 is achievable. Also, there is no funding attached to this bill for implementing the service recommendations of said plan therefore leaving it like every other well intentioned plan to collect dust on the shelves at the LOB. Herman Edwards says "A goal without a plan is a wish". Well I say a plan without funding is a wish too; the concept is excellent but we need the fiscal support to make it a reality.

Part B discusses that the Department of Developmental Services shall provide each person with an intellectual disability who is eligible to receive services from the department with the services which would make DDS services an entitlement.

Presently, adult services are not an entitlement meaning that just because an individual meets the eligibility requirements, DDS is not mandated to give those individual services. The Arc welcomes discussions around mandating services but we must be responsible and take that mandate one step at a time.

Connecticut is one of the last states in the country that still uses the IQ of 69 or lowers to determine eligibility. If entitlement were to pass before expanding eligibility, folks with an IQ higher than 70 including adults on the autism spectrum could be excluded from the service system forever. The bill as written could have unintentional consequences and so The Arc cautions the committee to really look at how the bill is written.

**Part C** recommends the workers who support individuals with I/DD shall have not have a reduction in wages or benefits as a result of services being delivered in section A & B. The Arc supports this as we believe the workers who support our folks should be paid a decent living wage with benefits like pensions and health benefits. I started in this field almost 20 years ago as a group home worker, I know firsthand how difficult this job can be and I personally find it disgraceful that in a state like Connecticut there are many workers who do this valuable work but can't afford health insurance for themselves or their children. Yet once again, there is no mention of where the increased funding to sustain this mandate will come from. If the committee wants to do this, The Arc strongly recommends the legislature create a mechanism to create funding for this recommendation and in addition, it should not take dollars away from individuals with I/DD, their individual budgets or from the provider system that supports them.

The Arc Connecticut respectfully offers these recommendations to the committee to be considered for discussions and as amendments to the bill. We hope the discussion today around this bill and the impact on people with I/DD, their families and the providers who support them will foster a collaborative spirit to look at the system from all angles, to bring all stakeholders to the table and to develop a strategy, mechanisms and the funding needed to move toward everyone's goal of expanding services and supports to those who need them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**43 Woodland Street, Suite 260  
Hartford, CT 06105**

[\(860\) 246-6400 x101](tel:(860)246-6400x101)

[lsimoes@arcofct.org](mailto:lsimoes@arcofct.org)

[www.thearcct.org](http://www.thearcct.org)