



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 Public Health Committee Public Hearing on Monday, February 23, 2015. If there are questions regarding my testimony please contact me at 860-218-6089 or [fstula@harc-ct.org](mailto:fstula@harc-ct.org).

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HARC is a community-based nonprofit organization in Hartford funded through the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). It was founded in 1951 and with a staff of 356, helps over 2,200 individuals 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 held meetings with many of our participants, families and direct-care staff over the summer to identify some of the current challenges they are facing that could be addressed through legislative action. Increased funding for programs, services and direct-care staff, more job opportunities for our participants (Bill No. 5893 & 5895) and less paperwork (Bill No. 5900) were by far, the most common answers.

Bill No. 5900 addresses the redetermination of eligibility for services with DDS however; the renewal of eligibility form (W-1ER) is through the Department of Social Services (DSS). DSS requires every person with an intellectual disability to verify their wages and Social Security income annually and in many cases bi-annually. This is to determine if individuals with intellectual disability will continue to get essential benefits such as medical insurance (Husky) and cash assistance to pay for their living arrangement.

Completing the required paperwork to insure the continuance of services is an important procedure which is the responsibility of parents, guardians and staff to complete. In order to reduce the burdensome paperwork requirements on them, the renewal of eligibility forms should be available to be filled out and submitted electronically. Additionally, DSS should work to establish a process and form for the permanent determination of intellectual disability to avoid any lapses in these vital services.

Additional funding is always the most important issue with helping nonprofit community providers. However, there are other steps that legislators can take to help parents, guardians and staff of individuals with intellectual disability. Voting favorably on Bill No. 5900 would accomplish that task and save the State of Connecticut money during these challenging fiscal times.