

HB 5900

I am submitting this testimony in favor of Bill Number 5900- An Act Concerning Electronic Eligibility Forms for Persons with Intellectual Disabilities.

Individuals with intellectual disability need to annually complete extensive redetermination paperwork with the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). In most cases parents and guardians are responsible to complete the forms. In order to ease the burden on parents and guardians to complete more paperwork Bill Number 5900 was introduced by Representative Kiner after hearing from parents and visiting HARC, Inc.

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 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.

As a residential program coordinator for HARC for the last 15 years I was responsible for completing or assisting to complete this paperwork for over 10 residents. The uninterrupted flow of vital benefits to support these individuals is dependent on timely receipt of redetermination paperwork. Often benefits were discontinued despite the fact that paperwork was mailed or physically dropped off on time to DDS. The drop off option was discontinued several years ago and support staff were required to mail or fax the paperwork. Faxes I sent never completely went through. I was informed by The Department of Developmental Services case management that the large amount of paperwork backed up the DSS Fax. An electronic option would alleviate this.

Additional funding is always the most important issue with helping nonprofit community providers. Requiring DDS to provide electronic redetermination eligibility forms and creating a permanent disability form will help these providers as well as accomplish a considerable monetary savings to the State of Connecticut during these challenging fiscal times. Creating a permanent disability form will allow people with Intellectual Disabilities and their support persons to be free from the annoyance and indignity of having to prove that their 'disability is still continuing' year after year. Intellectual Disabilities, especially those experienced from birth, should not be classified in the same category as an injury or other condition that can improve with timeto the point where benefits will, someday, not be needed.

Please Support Bill No. 5900! Thank You.

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