

**Richard D. Rothstein**  
**Public Health Committee Testimony**  
**March 3, 2015**

**Support for SB-918**

**An Act Concerning the Provision of Services to Individuals with Intellectual Disability**

My name is Richard D. Rothstein and I live in West Hartford. I would like to thank the Public Health Committee for holding a public hearing on this bill

I am testifying today in support of SB 918, An Act Concerning the Provision of Services with Intellectual Disability. I am the father and plenary guardian for my 32 year old son, Spencer, who has intellectual disability, autism and many complex medical issues. I also have extensive experience as an officer (including board chairman) and board member of HARC, a large nonprofit service provider for individuals with intellectual disability in Connecticut. For about five years, I was the Chief Financial Officer of CIL, a nonprofit housing developer which built and financed more than 400 of Connecticut's group homes. I have been out of these professional roles for more than a decade, but I remain an advocate for individuals and families facing the challenges of intellectual disability.

My son, Spencer, and our family are extremely fortunate. Many years ago, when the challenges that Spencer's intellectual disability and medical needs were more than our family could endure, the Department of Developmental Disabilities responded to a request for emergency placement. While a permanent placement was in process, the DDS provided a significant level of in-home supports. There were bumps along the way until Spencer's group home opened, however, despite a deep financial crisis facing the State of Connecticut at that time, the group home opened in June 1991.

Since that time, with the assistance of these supports, Spencer's behaviors have improved dramatically, his health has stabilized, and his abilities have grown. Spencer participates in a wide variety of community activities. His two younger siblings have been able to receive a fair share of our attention and support. Both love their brother unconditionally and he returns his love to them. Spencer's mother, his siblings and me are all very involved in his life. Spencer's youngest sibling is now a Special Education Teacher; she teaches those with Autism and severe behavioral issues.

While we are fortunate, we have seen many individuals and families not receive an appropriate level of support from DDS to assist them in meeting their needs. Some that we know have been waiting well more than a decade to receive the residential supports that they so desperately need. In this, the most affluent state in the United States, we can and must do better.

Over the years, I have been in touch with many individuals and families facing the challenges of intellectual disability. Over the past few years, the numbers of such individuals and families with

unmet needs have skyrocketed. Their stories are extremely compelling; I am sure you will hear many of them here today. My heart aches to hear the mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and even grandmothers and grandfathers tell their stories time and time again, only to have their needs continue to be unmet.

Despite significant growth in the State of Connecticut's overall budget in the last twenty years, it seems that those that are supposed to be served by DDS have become the forgotten. There has been no plan to address the needs of the now more than 2,000 individuals on the DDS Residential Services Waiting List. Many individuals and families don't even know where they are on the waiting list and progress towards reducing the numbers on the waiting list (even among those with an Emergency or Priority 1 label) have been non-existent.

This bill requires that a plan be developed in the very short term for the DDS to provide the necessary and appropriate services to individuals with intellectual services. It's long past time for the State of Connecticut to meet these obligations. I believe that the approach of this bill is well reasoned and vital to support those individuals and families facing the challenges of intellectual disability.

I am optimistic that Commissioner Morna Murray, the newly appointed commissioner of DDS, will do her very best to serve the intellectual disability community. Commissioner Murray has impressed me during the meetings of Governor Malloy's Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Working Group. Commissioner Murray will need the support of this committee and the legislature as a whole with adequate resources to fulfill the mission of DDS.

In closing, please note that in the past few weeks, I have attended the presentation to the CRDA about future plans for the XL Center in Hartford and the presentation to the legislature about the future plans for our transportation networks. As we speak, plans to finance such plans are already being pulled together. Our educational system (including higher education) already has long term plans and funding is in place for their goals to be realized. Don't individuals and families with intellectual disability deserve the same?

Your support and favorable report on this bill would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Richard D. Rothstein