

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and distinguished Members of the Public Health Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to share my support of Raised Bill 1088, An Act Concerning Services for Individuals with Intellectual Disability. My name is Joyce Lewis and I live in South Windsor.

I am a member of the Council on Developmental Disabilities as well as the mother of a child with significant disabilities. When my daughter was born, it was almost expected that a child with a significant disability would be placed in an institution. I am very grateful that services and supports existed to allow us to have my daughter at home until she passed away at the age of 7. However, many of her peers are still living in Connecticut's institutions. It is high time that all individuals with developmental disabilities have the opportunity to find home, health, friends, work, and presence in their community.

In my role as a provider, I have had the privilege of participating in the community transition of 9 individuals from an institution this year. I have been moved countless times by the comments of the individuals, "This is my home." Or the comments of the families over a cup of coffee at the house "This is the first time he has ever let us visit with him in his home. He could never wait to leave before".

The Council has called upon the Governor and the Legislature to close the state institutions by 2020. We appreciate your initiative in raising this bill to that end. One addition to enhance the bill would be to direct the savings toward appropriate services for all individuals with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for proposing this bill to begin to close the institutions of Connecticut and responding to the voices of our most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you also for this opportunity to testify today.

