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Testimony re: House Bill 5016
Submitted to the Appropriations Committee for the record to:
APPtestimony@cga.ct.gov
by Leslie Simoes, Executive Director

The Arc Connecticut is a 63-year old advocacy organization committed to protecting the rights of people with intellectual, cognitive, and developmental disabilities and to promoting opportunities for their full inclusion in the life of their communities.

Governor Malloy's has proposed budget cuts to the Office of Protection and Advocacy or OP&A by approximately \$200,000. While all state agencies are subject to a proposed 5.75% cut, small agencies such as OP&A would be especially affected. Such a cut could make it difficult to fund advocacy efforts that support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities throughout Connecticut.

The very mission of The Arc Connecticut is to advocate for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and anything that compromises the ability of Connecticut to do the same is a significant concern.

I am also the interim advisor to People First of Connecticut, a statewide self-advocacy organization, and our organization is very concerned about the impact of this budget cut. Or over 20 years, the OP&A has been funding critical advocacy in the state. They were funding self-advocacy efforts before anyone in the state even considered it important. A cut to that agency would be a huge loss for the self-advocacy movement in the state.

It is important that the Office of Protection & Advocacy be a strong, independent voice with credibility and full investigatory powers and the Governor and legislature support this agency.

The Arc Connecticut appeals to the members of the Committee to fully analyze this proposed cut and its potential unintended consequences. The comparatively small administrative savings associated with this cut is not enough to justify the potential ramifications of a much weakened Protection & Advocacy authority on individuals with disabilities and their families.

Please do not hesitate to call upon The Arc Connecticut for more information or further clarification of our position.