

**Richard D. Rothstein  
Public Health Committee Testimony  
February 16, 2016**

**Support for H.B. No. 5128**

**An Act Concerning Funds Appropriated To The Department Of Developmental Services**

**My name is Richard D. Rothstein and I live in West Hartford. I would like to thank the Public Health Committee for raising this bill and holding this public hearing. I am asking this committee to support and to vote in favor of H.B. 5128, An An Act Concerning Funds Appropriated To The Department Of Developmental Services.**

**I am the parent of a 33 year old son with intellectual disability, autism and a variety of significant medical issues including a kidney transplant, cataracts, avascular necrosis and osteoporosis. He is served by the Department of Developmental Services.**

**For the past 30 years, I have been involved in advocacy for the needs of individuals with intellectual disabilities. I presently serve as a member on the North Region Advisory and Planning Council of the Department of Developmental Services, Treasurer, board member and founding member of CT DDS Families First and as a board member at ARC Connecticut, Inc. In the past, I have also served as Chair and board member of HARC, Inc. and as Chief Financial Officer of the Corporation for Independent Living.**

**Services to individuals with intellectual disabilities are critical core services of the State of Connecticut. Many with intellectual disabilities are among our most vulnerable residents, unable to care for or speak for themselves in forums such as this public hearing. Each individual has different support needs along a continuum of services.**

**The need for residential, day and employment services and other programs of the Department of Developmental Services has grown at considerably faster rates than the funding for such programs. In recent years, there have been substantial cuts to the funding for such services. Funding has been essentially flat for programs operated by private not for profit providers for many years.**

**The waiting list for residential services now numbers more than 2,000; in the past fiscal year, only 11 individuals (whose parents are under age 70 or who are not classified as emergencies) were placed in the residential services that they need. Some individuals and their parents have been a "Priority 1" portion of the waiting list for well more than a decade. These placements, by the department's own guidelines, are supposed to be placed within a year or two.**

**Senior managers of the department have said at public meetings that "we do not have sufficient resources to deal with emergencies." Such emergencies increase in frequency when less expensive needs of individuals (and their family caregivers) are unmet for years at a time. Dealing with emergencies also distracts from the orderly ongoing effort of providing servies in a planful and effective way.**

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**There are now waiting lists for day and employment services and behavioral services; respite services and family support grants have been slashed, some of the very services that keep families from going “over the edge.”**

**The Department of Developmental Services has and will continue to look for efficiency in its administration and delivery of services, especially in consolidation of and privatization of certain public sector programs. This bill will allow these (and any other) savings to be reinvested to serve the very long overlooked needs of those who are on the waiting lists for such services and to provide respite, behavioral services and family support grants.**

**I acknowledge that the State of Connecticut faces difficult budget issues at the present time, however, the health and safety of these individuals (and their family caregivers) are increasingly at risk. In many cases, family caregivers need to reduce their work hours or leave the work force entirely. Such actions have negative economic effect not only on the family, but on the overall economy as well.**

**Thank you in advance for your vote in favor of supporting this bill which it is hoped will help provide services to many in need.**

**I would also ask that the Public Health Committee raise two other bills during this session that deal with the Department of Developmental Services. Both bills provide for improvements, without additional funding, which will benefit individuals with intellectual disabilities. Thank you to Representatives Pam Staneski, Charlie Ferraro and Noreen Kokoruda for their work on the first bill and Representative Mike Demmico for his work on the second bill. Many members of the Public Health Committee have indicated to me (and others) their support for raising these bills.**