

February 18, 2016

EDUCATION COMMITTEE TESTIMONY

Re: Raised Bill No. 5128, An Act Concerning Funds Appropriated to the Department of Developmental Services

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support of Raised Bill 5128.

I am the parent of 16 year old triplets, one of whom has Down syndrome.

My typically developing boys will, upon graduation from high school, likely go to college, get jobs, get married – all the prerequisites to having a productive, rewarding, entirely self-sufficient life.

My daughter, in contrast – through no fault of her own – will never be entirely self-sufficient. She will always rely upon public assistance to support her financially, in her employment (if she is one of the fortunate few to get a job) and especially in her housing. Yet the reality is that, unless things change, she will never get the residential support she so desperately needs – and to which she is entitled. She doesn't want to live with her parents any more than her brothers do, yet she will stagnate on that so-called "waiting list" for housing until faced with the ultimate family emergency: the death or incapacitation of both me and my husband.

A lesson we have always taught our children is that fair isn't always equal; fair means that everyone gets what he or she requires. My daughter – and the over 2000 vulnerable adults with disabilities who have been waiting far too long for housing – need public assistance so they can move out of their childhood homes and lead maximally fulfilling, self-sufficient lives. The least we can do is require funds appropriated to the Department of Developmental Services that are unexpended at the end of fiscal years 2016 and 2017 to remain available for expenditure by the department in subsequent years – to help at least a handful of all the Connecticut residents in need. These are funds that have already been appropriated for use by this agency, for this very purpose, allowing DDS to apply any savings it achieves to help more of our most vulnerable residents.

I urge you to support this legislation, which is a small but critical step forward in helping our state's most vulnerable residents.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sheryl Knapp  
Ridgefield, CT

