



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



February 9, 2016
Testimony re: House Bill 5016,
Proposed cuts to the budget of the Office of Protection and Advocacy
for Persons with Disabilities
Submitted to the Appropriations Committee for the record to:
APPtestimony@cga.ct.gov
by Molly Cole, Director,
CT Council on Developmental Disabilities

The Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities (CTCDD) is a Governor-appointed body of people with disabilities, family members and professionals who work together to promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities in community life. The CTCDD engages in advocacy, capacity building and systems change activities on behalf of people with developmental disabilities, their families and their communities. Along with the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (OPA) and the University of Connecticut Center for Excellence for People with Disabilities, we make up the Developmental Disabilities (DD) Network in CT. Thus we are very, very familiar with the exemplary work the Office of Protection and Advocacy does and the services they provide.

As our DD Network Partner, the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities is funded to:

- Provide information, referral, and advocacy services;
Pursue legal and administrative remedies on behalf of people with disabilities who experience disability-related discrimination;
- Investigate allegations of abuse and neglect that arise in specific service settings or that affect individuals with particular disabilities; and,
- Provide education, information and training on disability rights to policy makers, advocacy groups and members of the public.

The Council works closely with OPA on a number of initiatives including Partners in Policymaking leadership training, support to the Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, Special Education Clinics to help families access quality special education services, restraint and seclusion issues, Employment Issues and policy efforts.

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Governor Malloy's proposed budget will cut the OPA budget by approximately \$200,000. This is a devastating cut to a small agency already functioning at bare bones. The services provided by OPA are critical to many individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in our state. This cut will make it extremely difficult to provide advocacy that supports these individuals throughout Connecticut. These seemingly small savings in the budget will have a critical and negative effect on the lives of people with developmental disabilities in our state---a population that has already had significant cuts in services and supports.

The Council requests that the committee consider these issues and reject this proposed cut to OPA. Feel free to contact the Council if we can offer further information regarding this.