

February 18, 2016 Appropriation Committee testimony on H.B. # 5044
Respectfully submitted by Lynn S. Arezzini (mother of Karl Arezzini)

Our son Karl is a gifted 25-year-old cellist and singer who has autism. Karl is an enigma because while being featured at the Tribeca Film Festival and performing twice at Carnegie Hall, he still has enormous difficulty brushing his teeth, crossing the street and living an independent life.

For three and one half years Karl has been thriving at Chapel Haven, a program with forty years experience serving the IDD (intellectually and developmentally disabled) population. DDS (Department of Developmental Services) South Region Director Dailey and DDS commissioner Murray concur that Chapel Haven is an exceptional program for disabled adults. At our last appeal meetings they both noted Karl's extraordinary growth and on-going success.

So I ask, "Why does DDS serve 200 adults at state institutions like Southbury for over \$400,000 each per year while 2000 people (including Karl) on the waiting list could be served for \$65,000 per year at programs like Chapel Haven? In the near future, Karl's success story will end when we run out of funds and can no longer work as public school teachers. Bringing adults with disabilities home after they have been successfully living in the community is not only cruel, it is a huge waste of the investments that the public schools, DDS and families have made in these individuals over many years. Why invest in 15 years of public special education, and transition training if a disabled adult's future is to live home with elderly parents? There are also hidden costs to taxpayers when families live in crisis mode for too long. Society pays for families' medical costs for stress-related illnesses. Our state loses tax revenue and has to pay unemployment benefits when families can't work due to the burden of caring for their disabled loved ones. These scenarios are wasteful and morally wrong.

Wouldn't it be better for our 25-year-old son to be living independently now so that he doesn't become an expensive burden to society as an emergency placement? Wouldn't it be a better use of funding to allow Karl to become more independent and productive, rather than let his skills of independence regress until the traumatic day when he becomes an emergency placement

following our deaths? Karl's needs are immediate and can not wait until we die. He needs residential supports now! Karl is counting on all of you to take the moral high ground. Reform DDS and Medicaid and, with those savings, secure Karl's future and protect his civil rights. Support H.B 5044.