

## **Appropriations Committee Hearing - February 18, 2016**

**Statement from Bruce Friedland; Guardian to Lisa Friedland—  
resident of 77 Mountain Road, Newington Center (DDS)**

### **House Bill No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017 Privatization of Group Homes due to Budget Cuts**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I am the guardian of my sister Lisa Friedland who is intellectually and developmentally disabled. Imagine my surprise when I received a call from DDS in December. I was told that Lisa's home was going to be taken away from her on March 1. She will be potentially separated from her family (in many ways) of 30+ years, the residents and staff that she lives with. This will be a great way for her to celebrate her March 6 birthday.

December was the first that I had heard of the closing. The cold, uncaring, matter-of-fact call that I received simply rubbed salt in the wound. The letter I received from DDS management was even more insulting. It was just as cold but it went a little further in terms of what it did not have. None of my rights to appeal the decision or contact Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy was in the DDS letter.

My sister is a severely developmentally disabled adult of almost 49 years of age. Her disabilities are primarily cognitive, although she has significant physical difficulties, as well. She operates at about the level of a toddler in most ways. She is unstable on her feet so she has largely been confined to a wheel chair over the last few years. She requires 24/7 supervision.

Lisa has been at the Hartford Regional Center since 1973 and a resident of 77 Mountain Rd. for more than 30 years. She has built close relationships with both staff and residents.

As a Connecticut taxpayer, I fully understand the fiscal difficulties that this state has. I agree with the general premise of Governor Malloy, which is that expenses must be cut, not taxes raised. The question is where should expense cuts be made? I get that everyone will say that their area cannot be

cut for all these good reasons. This area I think most will agree should be left alone.

When looking at the DDS budget, it may have made sense to cut expenses here. Unfortunately there are human beings behind a budget line. If we think more deeply about this, are these potential closings something that we really want to do? Do we really want to kick long-time residents out of their home, especially people who do not understand why this is happening to them? Do we really want to shuffle around the weakest and most helpless residents of our state? I cannot believe that we want to portray an image of a state that lacks compassion for its most dependent residents.

I would like to leave you with one final thought. My sister is especially close with one of the staff at her house. This woman was out of work for several months. In my quarterly reviews with staff, it was noted that Lisa was picking her skin. Even though she was assured the woman would be back, it clearly had some impact on Lisa. Is picking skin life threatening? Of course it is not. The concern that I have is for my sister's health. Should she be moved, she will be in a new environment with new people and she will not know why. The moves dictated by budget considerations will be a significant loss for my sister. Imagine if you were separated from your family.

I urge you to please reconsider what you are doing. My sister has enough challenges and deserves better.

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