

HB5044 An Act Concerning the State Budget for The Department of Developmental Services,

Submitted by: Jamie Lazaroff, Self-Advocate Coordinator, Arc Quinebaug Valley, Secretary, Council on Developmental Services

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Jamie Lazaroff I am a Self-Advocate Coordinator for The Arc Quinebaug Valley, a non-profit agency that provides support and advocacy for children and adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities and their families, I am the Secretary to the Council on Developmental Services and I am also am a Board of Directions for Arc CT.

I am a Self-Advocate Coordinator for The Arc Quinebaug Valley, a non-profit agency that provides support and advocacy for children and adults with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities and their families. I am the Secretary to the Council on Developmental Services and I am also a member of the Board of Directions for Arc CT. Despite being born with Developmental Disabilities I have reached for my dreams and in 1995 I was nominated for a New England Emmy Award. Right now I have 9 hours a week of residential supports in my home and 19.5 hrs. a week of personal supports in my job. I need supports to help me live past my basic needs. I need my staff to help me with my day to day life in order to be an active member of my community, to keep my job so I can help to support myself, and pay taxes.

The Governor's proposal has identified "Improving services for individuals with Intellectual Disabilities" as one of his top priorities. This is a good first step, but, a cut to the DDS budget will limit us from reaching our full potential to be contributing members of our community. Not to mention no new money for the over 2,000 families on the DDS Residential Waiting List. In addition, there are now, also, waiting lists for Day & Employment Services, Autism Services, BSP, and Respite Services because of repeated cuts to the DDS budget. My concern is that the money saved by moving away for the group home model to a community system is put back into the DDS budget and not the general fund. This will not achieve the goal of expanding services and removing families from the DDS Waiting List.

I would like to quote your colleague Senator Ted Kennedy Jr. "We are advocating for civil rights, equality, self-determination, and dignity for all citizens of this great state. We deserve the right to live an independently as possible in our communities and not in an isolated, segregated, apartheid like environment."

Thank you,

Jamie Lazaroff

Self-Advocate Coordinator, The Arc Quinebaug Valley

Secretary, Council on Developmental Services

Board of Directors, Arc CT