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06360

State of Connecticut Appropriations Committee  
February 18, 2016  
HB No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE  
EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30,  
2017

Dear honored representatives of the Appropriations Committee;

I am here to testify against House Bill No. 5044.

My name is Stephen Homiski. I am an employee of the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services and more importantly, a father of two developmentally disabled children.

In my long time career with DDS, we were told and encouraged to be family of the individuals we served. I have cared for many individuals with severe behavioral issues and who are medically fragile. I, and my co-workers, have become family with these individuals-forming close emotional bonds. Housemates have formed a family unit. We have seen them through their triumphs as well as their tragedies. Because of low turn-over, we have provided consistency in the lives of individuals who depend and thrive on predictability and continuity. The training and insight we have acquired is irreplaceable. To propose to decimate these services by reducing funding and privatizing thirty homes can do real harm to the individuals' emotional and physical well-being. We have

seen no reports or data tracking the short term or long term effects on individuals impacted by closures and privatizations. I believe the Agency should be looking to maximize revenue to maintain and improve services.

I currently work in respite, and I have seen first-hand the loss of availability of these services as well. Most of the year, respite is only available about 4 days per week to families. There is more need than what is being provided. There is virtually no long-term respite readily available to families in crisis. As a parent, these additional cuts will heavily impact all of us. Even those with the most minimal of service -- be it by low-dollar grants or day/vocational programs -- will be impacted. The families transitioning from school will have few, if any, options. The hope for any type of residential care is disappearing. The waiting/planning lists are a broken promise. There are still thousands more of parents like myself who worry every day about what will happen to our loved ones that do not appear on any "list". To constantly live in a state of anxiety in addition to the taxing physical and emotional toll of caring for our loved ones is unbearable. To balance the budget on the backs of already exhausted families is to push us further into a crisis over which we have no control. Thirty two million this year, and annualizing eighteen million dollars is cutting off what small lifeline we have. I respectfully ask that you reject this proposal and engage the real families in your constituency to be able to move forward.

Thank you.