



**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
February 19th, 2016
By Leslie Simoes, Executive Director, The Arc Connecticut**

Testimony: Raised Bill 5176 *AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY RESIDENCES*

Thank you Senator Osten, Representative Miller and members of the Planning and Development Committee for the opportunity to testify this evening on ***HB 5176 AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY RESIDENCES***.

My Name is Leslie Simoes and I am the executive director of The Arc Connecticut. The Arc is a 63-year old advocacy organization committed to protecting the basic civil basic rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to promoting opportunities for their full inclusion in the life of their communities. We are part of The Arc of The United States. Nationwide there are 675 chapters in 49 states with about 4700 service locations. Across the country we have about 6900 board members, 124,000 staff, more than 46,000 volunteers and collectively we serve more than 1 million people - individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities or I/DD and their family members.

Here in Connecticut there are 18 chapters with a total revenue of about \$103 million dollars. There are more than 195 board members, 3,729 staff and more than 1,288 volunteers.

The Arc was formed more than sixty years ago when parents of individuals with I/DD started organizing all around the country, in living rooms, church basements, in true grass roots fashion, with the goal of creating a better life for their sons and daughters with I/DD. Last week The Arc Connecticut in conjunction with the Connecticut Intellectual & Developmental Disability (I/DD) Caucus hosted a Family Action Day and over 150 families, advocates, individuals with disabilities and providers came to the capitol to lobby their legislators about the proposed budget.

The Arc Connecticut *STONGLY OPPOSES* Raised Bill 5176.

This bill, if enacted would (1) allow each municipality to name a liaison on group home issues and annually requires DPH, DDS and DMHAS to provide each municipal liaison a list of existing and proposed group homes located in the municipality, and (2) establish a task force on the distribution of group homes throughout the state.

This bill is so disturbing I am not sure where to begin.

The Arc has spent the last 30 years since our Mansfield lawsuit created the group home system for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities fighting for the basic civil rights of these individuals to live in the community. For many years we have fought bills similar to HB 5178 that would mandate or require public hearings to open group homes, public disclosure of names of those who live in group homes and the dissolution of group homes as a whole.

For some reason, even in 2016, society still treats persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities as second class citizens. The implication of the language in this bill is indeed another example that society still believes that people with disabilities are not equal citizens and where they live should be tracked is utterly disturbing and disrespectful.

Connecticut does need the recommended provisions in this bill. Please do not vote favorably on HB 5178.

I am available to answer any questions you may have and can be contacted at the information below. Thank you for your time.

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