

February 19,2016

To: Members of the Planning and Development Committee

Re: Raised Bill 5176 An Act concerning Community Residences

My name is Sandra Inzinga, I am currently President of the Connecticut Association of the Deaf. I also am a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor.

I am in favor of creating the task force that is mentioned in this legislation. However I would like to note that municipalities need to be aware of their responsibilities to residences not in compliance with any statues or regulations.

There are a number of statues and requirements that pertain to individuals with disabilities. People with disabilities have rights to access, both physical access and communication access.

Municipalities as well as the individuals appointed to the task force must be mindful of these requirements and laws. There are a number of group homes throughout the state of CT that house deaf individuals where the staff does not communicate in sign language.

HB 5176 identifies individuals served by the Department of Public Health, the Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. There are a number of individuals who meet eligibility for these services, who also are Deaf. In my work, I have seen examples of group homes that do not have communication accessible staff.

The language and communication accessibility needs of this population is denied if the staff cannot communicate effectively in sign language. This population is often overlooked, and their communication needs are neglected.

Accessibility regulations, both physical access and communication access regulations, need to be looked at and should be a focus of the task force, with representation from individuals with disabilities.

Respectfully submitted,

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