

TESTIMONY FOR HOUSE BILL 5128
An Act Concerning Funds Appropriated
To the Department of Developmental Services

I would like to thank the committee chairs of the Public Health Committee, Senator Gerratana and Representative Ritter for raising this bill concerning funds appropriated to the Department of Disability Services. My name is Larry Gray and my wife, Joan, and I have a daughter with a developmental disability who currently lives at home with us at 124 Laurel Ridge in East Hampton, CT.

Lauren currently receives funding from DDS to attend MARC Community Resources in Cromwell. MARC provides her with a blended program which includes daily living skills and vocational support at several work sites such as kitchen work at Holy Apostles College, delivering meals with the Meals on Wheels program and prepares tableware at Chili's. She is very happy with this program because it gives her a chance to be out in the community and she feels she has a place in society just as her non-disabled family members and friends. We know this important to her because she shares her daily experiences with us and she is always looking forward to the next day. It is important to us to know that she is busy and has good self-esteem and is not sitting around with nothing to do

This program is also important to us because it provides a safe environment for Lauren while we are both a work. Without this program it would be difficult for both of us to continue working. We would not be able to leave Lauren home alone for such a prolonged period of time.

We strongly support this bill that will require that DDS keep any budget savings or lapses and make them available to serve unmet needs such as the DDS waiting lists. This is the "money stays in the DDS system" bill families have been waiting for years. Lauren is on this waiting list and the way the system works now there is no money to support these individuals who are waiting for a supported living environment. Our concerns for the future are what will happen to Lauren when we are gone or no longer able to provide for her basic living needs. Since state funding has been drastically cut and is not available until an emergency hits – such as the death of the last custodial parent – that parent will never know where the adult child ends up and if it is a good home. The adult child is now facing the death of a supporting parent and the trauma of moving into an unfamiliar environment. Can you imagine yourself having to deal with this overwhelming situation? If the money stayed with DDS the majority of these individuals could receive the support they need before this situation occurs.

We also request that the committee raise the comprehensive "DDS Family's Right Bill" proposed by Representative Demicco.