

## **Testimony to the Public Health Committee**

**March 16, 2018**

**By Leslie Simoes, Executive Director  
Autism Services & Resources CT**

### **RB 463 AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FACILITIES AND RESOURCES PLAN FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY**

Thank you Senator Gerratana, Representative Steinberg and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My Name is Leslie Simoes and I am the executive director of Autism Services & Resources CT or ASRC. ASRC is a 22 year old statewide advocacy organization committed to providing support and resources to individuals on the autism spectrum and their families. We started ASRC because at the time there was absolutely nothing for individuals on the spectrum that had IQ's of 70 or higher and I mean nothing. CT is one of the last states in the country that still uses the medical diagnosis of Mental Retardation of having an IQ of 69 or lowers to be eligible for services. This outdated eligibility statute leaves thousands on the autism spectrum with out any support or access to lifesaving services.

ASRC has worked tirelessly to put into place the Autism Division, worked with Office of Policy and Management, The Department of Developmental Services and the Department of Social Services to create a Medicaid Waiver for adults on the spectrum with IQ's higher than 70 and have shaped the lives of thousands of families who had no where else to turn. Our history is truly a basic civil rights grassroots movement.

SB 463 on paper looks innocent enough, however, we fear implementation of such a "study" would indeed cause even more resource deprivation to an already deprived population.

As previously stated, CT chooses not to serve individuals with IQ's of 70 or higher based on outdated eligibility requirements and lack of political will to make the necessary systemic changes to the system. As a result thousands of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders or ASD are left with nothing. When

you combine this sad fact with the unmet needs of those individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities or ID/DD with or without ASD who are eligible for services but are stuck languishing on waiting lists we know that futures planning is needed.

However, the task force to be formed in SB 463 will study “alternative underutilized resources, including, but not limited to, nursing homes and rehabilitation centers.” This is concerning for numerous reasons but perhaps the most concerning is as previously stated, there is a huge population of individuals on the autism spectrum that do not receive ANY services. We do not need a study, we need the political will to appropriate state funding for services and supports for those with ASD and ID/DD now.

We know that individuals with disabilities do not thrive in nursing homes and rehabilitation centers. Numerous studies have already been conducted in CT and across the country showing better outcomes when living in the community. Continued and increased use of these settings would leave individuals with ASD and ID/DD living in outdated segregated institutional settings, contrary to both State and federal policy.

What families with loved ones with ASD, and ID/DD have been expressing for years is increased access to resources and services in the communities of their choosing. The state has been moving toward a private, non-profit system of support that ultimately will cause a decrease of reliance on state funding. Planning for the future of services for these populations is critical but this bill is not the vehicle for addressing this need.

ASRC urges the committee to vote against this bill.

I am available to answer any questions now or after the hearing today and I thank you for this opportunity to testify today.

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