Advocacy Day – April 10, 2019

I am Lois Nitch, parent and legal conservator for my son, Andrew Puglisi. Andy has been under the care of Oak Hill/CIB for the past 33 years. Andy has cerebral palsy, cortical blindness, behavior disorder and epilepsy all of which require trained staff to help him with his daily living i.e. giving him his medication, preparing his meals, bathing and personal hygiene and safety at home and in the community. There is a lot of talk about using technology for caring for people but my son needs old fashioned hands on loving care.

I am here today to voice my deep concerns over what is happening to Oak Hill and other agencies that are closing group homes and day programs for individuals who need homes to live in and programs where they can feel happy and make friends and have a reason to get up in the morning and stability and staff that know how to care for them.

Andy's group home was closed on August 1st of 2017 because of under funding for nonprofits and he and his three roommates had to be displaced to other homes. I was given little to no guidance in finding a new home for Andy. When I went to visit a home for Andy there was another individual there on the same day looking for a bed and I felt I needed to make a decision to secure a place for him to live. This home turned out to be not a good placement for Andy as he was afraid of another individual living there. I have never seen him cry as much as he did or be so confused. I never thought Andy would be put in such turmoil. Moving him and the other three gentlemen has disrupted their lives and that of the staff that were caring for them. These are real people and this was their family and their home for 18 years. I moved Andy to another home in December of 2018 he now lives closer to me and the staff are working hard to help him adjust. He keeps telling me I am trying mom but I miss my friends they were like my brothers. These 4 gentlemen have not seen each other for over a year. When do we as a society start to care about our most venerable? We are going backward in helping care for people with disabilities. People like my Andy are in need of skilled caretakers and as they age their care increases. Funding for nonprofits should never be on the table to be cut. Staff taking care of individuals like my Andy should be compensated for the job they are doing. Wages have been underfunded for the past 20 years.

I began this journey with Andy 53 years ago and my goals have never changed. To ensure Andy has the best quality of care and a home to keep him safe and to give him every opportunity to grow to his highest potential. At this stage in my life I should not have to be fighting another battle but I am because I have worked too hard and long for Andy’s group home and day programs.

As legislators you can make decisions that can help people live lives to their highest potential. Andy’s home and day program were a success, I can’t believe what has happen to all my hard work for him and others.

Lois M. Nitch
9 Basswood Court
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
860 257-4334 (H) 860 416-9368