

February 28, 2008

HB 5132 An Act Appropriating Funds To The Family Support Council.

Good morning Sen. Meyer, Rep. McMahon and members of the Select Committee on Children.

My name is Angela Spino. I am a Disability Policy Specialist for the CT Council on Development Disabilities. I am also a parent. I have a son with Autism. I live in Plainfield.

The CT Council on Developmental Disabilities encourages your support for HB 5132 An Act Concerning Appropriating Funds To The Family Support Council.

Appropriating state funds for the CT Family Support Council is long overdue. The Family Support Council has operated very well since its inception in 1994 without paid staff, thanks to the dedication of many volunteer parents, mostly moms, and thanks to the in-kind support from the Department of Developmental Services, however, over these 14 years, the times have changed. The success of the Family Support Council is part of the problem. As more and more public and private agencies have recognized the value of family participation in determining policy and program implementation, more and more public and private agencies have called upon the Family Support Council for short and long-term policy development and program implementation. This has translated into more demand on the time of volunteer parents. At the same time, the world for families of children with disabilities has become more complex and demanding. It is wonderful that more resources have been created for families, and put under the control of families, but this means that families have had to become their own advocates, their own case managers and their own program implementers, as well as hold down jobs and care for their families. This has reduced the number of families available to volunteer and reduced the time availability of those who can volunteer. Finally, the in-kind support from the Department of Developmental Services has been stretched thinner and thinner as other demands have been added to those who have provided support.

Appropriating state funds for the CT Family Support Council is the right public policy in order for Connecticut to continue to promote leadership by families in planning, policy development, implementation, and evaluation of family support services for families of children with disabilities. We urge your support.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions.

