



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

Public Forums

To identify the concerns of people with disabilities and their families

Friday July 27, 2007 3 – 5 pm

RI Department of Health's Health Policy Forum basement
Three Capitol Hill, Providence **Governor's Commission on Disabilities**
John O. Pastore Center – 41 Cherry Dale Court, Cranston, RI 02920-3049

Transcript

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: I'd like to welcome everyone here this afternoon. My name is Kate McCarthy-Barnett, at the department of health we'd like to welcome you here today. We are happy to have you here today. The purpose of the forums, really the state government and sponsoring organizations really want to here from people with disabilities. Their families regarding your concerns and ideas for improving the lives of all Rhode Islanders with disabilities. We do have a few rules to review although we're a small group, we would like to start out ensuring everyone has time to speak that each speaker take about five minutes and after hearing from everyone, we'll go back and have time to include additional questions. The panelists are here this afternoon to answer questions and help to understand your concern a little better so at this point I'd like to ask each panelist to state your name and your affiliation, ors or agency you're here to represent.

>>>BILL INLOW: I'm Bill Inlow, disability services coordinator at Rhode Island public transit authority, RIPTA, I also work closely with the RIDE program.

>>>DEB GARNEAU GARNEAU: Deb Garneau, Health Department.

>>>KATE BOWDEN: Kate Bowden staff attorney with the Disability Law Center.

>>>JOHN DUPREE: John Dupree, National alliance of mental illness of Rhode Island.

>>>JOAN WOOD: Joan Wood, Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: Elaina Goldstein, Project director of Rhodes to Independence the project trying to help people with disabilities become competitively employed.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you and thank you for taking time this afternoon. Housekeeping. Rest rooms are on the first floor you can take the elevator. After we call your name we'd appreciate it if you could state your name again and if you're representing an organization or agency because the CART reporter will need to document that. So to become I would like to invite Ellen more set to share any concerns or questions she has for our panel members this afternoon.

>>>EILEEN MORRISSETTE: That's me. I'm here to observe, I'm a student getting involved with Special Ed. indication for visually impaired children and I'm here to observe.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Okay, thank you for coming. At this point then Barbara Torres.

>>>BARBARA TORRES: Hi, I'm with family voices of the Rhode Island Parent Information Network.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Any questions or concerns you would like to share?

>>>BARBARA TORRES: At this moment, I don't.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you so much for coming. Okay. I think at this point then we also have Marilyn McCullough who signed up. Marilyn, did you have any questions or concerns you would like to share? And if you could state your name again for the CART reporter.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Would you like me to stand? Marilyn McCullough. I'd like to put my phone number on record, 401-419-7787. I'm actually here today for two reasons, and it will take nine minutes.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: That's fine. Take your time.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: You have two hours.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: I'm here because of current difficulties I'm having with the recreation department, and I'm here for self. Recreation commission, excuse me.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: Did you say for yourself?

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Representing myself. I'm having difficulty with the recreation commission in the town of Hopkinton trying to put in a handicapped playground. Just a brief history of what has occurred and brought me to this point. My daughter Sarah Jane McCullough was severely handicapped and confined to a wheelchair. Not only was she non verbal and ambulatory, but vision and hearing impaired. We often go for walks in Crandall Field in Ash away, and one day at the playground, a comment was made, isn't it a beautiful playground? Yes, but we can't go over there. At the time I didn't think twice about it, it was just something we do not do. And you have to understand, to get to this playground, I'd have to push her wheelchair through the grass which is very difficult, lift her one foot off the ground to put her on the board walk and wood chips to push her through to get to the equipment. Once in the playground area, the only thing that we could have done to watch the kids play because there is no equipment for Sarah to play on and to accommodate her wheelchair and to me that would have been very cruel so we didn't do that. Well, Sarah died in March of 2003. And at that moment, I had vowed that no wheelchair bound child should ever be denied the ability to play at playgrounds. I had received permission from the town of Hopkinton to build a handicapped playground in Sarah's memory at Crandall field. My goal is accessible as well as usable playground for children and adults of all abilities, thus allowing perhaps for the first time a true sense of inclusion for a child of special needs can play together with their siblings, it will be added to the existing playground connecting the two together as one with a board walk surrounding the existing playground starting with the parking lot. This playground design is specifically tailored for adults and children in wheelchair while accommodating children with special needs but are ambulatory. Within the first year of Sarah's death, my family and I with help of dedicated volunteers raised over \$109,000. Three years since the funds have been raised and the playground is still not built. I'm here today because have I more barrier from the recreation commission from specific equipment needs, colors to accepting the solutions and recommendations from our expert engineers when addressing these concerns. I'm consistently providing them with research on every piece of equipment showing the documented benefits a child with special needs would receive as well as the benefits of colors and contrast. Over the past four years, the recreation department has asked me to change the site locations numerous times, changes, reflecting every location change, they have consistently claimed that 100 percent of this community donated funds belong to the town and claim it as their town money. Yes, the town is holding the funds in my daughter's memory for this playground but it is not the town's money. Had I known in lieu of flowers send money to the town of Hopkinton to build a handicapped playground in Sarah's memory would have added so many delays, I would not have. I believe the recreation department sees this as a burden, not as a gift and they have never embraced this project. The latest concern as of July 24th, '07 is that they do not really want to put concrete in the playground area and that was their quote. Please understand that this equipment must have a concrete base or the playground cannot be built. They have stated concerns about the concrete base cracking and lifting the equipment. With respect to the commission, they have justifiable concerns as their basketball court poles were lifted up. However I brought in an expert engineer who knows this location and has actually build buildings at this site and with proper installation and special concrete fabric he assures us this will not happen. Thus meeting the manufacturer's warranty requirements for installation. The response to this was, they have no maintenance money to fix it should the equipment up root. The recreation department received an approval last year for an open space matching grant of 125 thousand dollar from DEM to build a handicapped playground for total playground cost of \$250,000. The grant request was written against the funds I had raised that the town is holding in my daughter's memory. I do not know the details of this grant but I do know the funds were awarded to the recreation department. In 2003, I had inn kind donations for concrete and excavating. It is now 2007, those offerings may no longer be available to me to fall back on due to the great delay of the Commission on this project. However based on the grant that was awarded the to the recreation

department, there should be money for maintenance should that be necessary. I feel the recreation commission has danced and skirted around moving forward with any significant progress for too long. I've been asked the last two years from the community and investors what is the status of the playground all I can tell them is we're working on it. The truth is we have had all of the money needed for three years. I can't understand what the true delay is myself. Do they just not want it? I don't know. I have raised 100 percent of the money. We have the town council's permission and we have a location, I just want to put it in. The children have been waiting too long, why? Where is accountability to these children? The community and investors are now losing patience. Not only do I owe them an explanation but they require an explanation for documentation of their donation. I requested the commission to assist me in providing an explanation to the community and investors as to see why the delay and what we intend to do to move forward. The response July 24th was they do not owe the community any answers, but just tell them we are working on it and you can go to the paper. Enough is enough. I need help, I need accountability from these people, any legal advice to assist me in moving this forward to help create a time line and a start date or to help me to remove the funds to allow me to put the playground in at another location. I believe this needs to be looked into. That's my first reason why I'm here.

The second reason for being here is I believe there is a natural element that is missing in the family dynamics which is family recreation when it comes to people in wheelchairs. I believe all playgrounds must be integrated to stop the discrimination. Changes must be made and it must be mandated. People affected are the children. The parents who are in wheelchairs who cannot take their typically developing children to the playground as they need accessibility to monitor and keep them receive and additionally the families who cannot bring their grandparents who are wheelchair bound to see their grandchildren play on a Sundays afternoon. How much longer must we stay home because they cannot get to the playground? So, how can we make change and the answer is in three steps'. First, we need to support the grass root sites such as mine by doing so there must be funds set aside for legal advice and support, assisting in gathering local and political support and assistance in navigating administrative process. Second, we need to address the brown field sites. By doing so we need to influence the design of the existing playground when they come due for refurbishing. Or legal reasons or insurance concerns or just general maintenance. We need to identify and influence the decision makers. As examples, who is paying for the playground, the funding sources. We need to identify the local town councils, planning boards, building inspectors, and playground equipment manufacturers because they provide a lot of the design advice and need to meet the commercial needs. We also need the playground equipment manufacturers to promote equipment for all abilities. And finally the third is we need to address the green field sites. On the playground should be mandated to have integrated playgrounds. By doing this in this order, this will allow us to use what resources we have to most benefit now and build on the future. The grass roots efforts can be done without much cost. The brown field sites are where most of the changes are and opportunity also happen but it will require the convincing of other people. green field sites may have less opportunity for immediate change but they will be more focused on government regulations. And I would just like to say that we all know our children learn through play, my life goal to plan date a law to require at our playgrounds. Would you join me in investigating in our children's future.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you, Marilyn. I'd like to open it up now to the panel for any feedback .

>>>BILL INLOW: First of all, I appreciate very much your testimony and energy. You don't have a playground yet in your daughter's honor but her mother's actions and advocacy on her behalf and on behalf of other children with disabilities would make her very proud. I'm not -- can you explain the difference between a brown field and a green field?

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Brown fields are the existing playgrounds that currently exist. green field are potential new sites.

>>>BILL INLOW: Okay. I wonder about the applicable, you know, the laws either local ordinances within the town of Hopkinton versus state rules or procedures versus some kind of federal. I'm not a lawyer so I just wonder what -- have you had some advice at least from some attorneys?

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: No, I haven't. Unofficial advice, more opinions. Again, our town council has been expecting this to move forward. It is the smaller component, the recreation commission who has created the obstacles. I actual will I have a letter to address to the town council and the town that I haven't mailed yet, I was hoping that perhaps it could be reviewed and you could advice me if, to wording that I need to change to address the importance of this. To be accountable to their people Patricia Ryherd, work for the office of service but also a member of the Commission on disabilities. I believe at the National level, there is information about that. And I think that we can provide you with some information. So, if you don't mind, just calling the Governor's Commission on Disabilities and gives about a week, we'll see, you know, like what there is at the federal level and at the state level, examples of designs and what relevant laws there are. I appreciate your advocacy.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: Off the top of my head, it's 462-0100. And that will get you into the general mailbox and then someone will call you back. There are like five different phone lines but that gets you into the general mailbox of the governor's commission. If you want to, at the end of the forum if up want to leave me your name and address and telephone number so I'll be sure that it goes both ways.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Would that help me with my current situation or for my future desire to make changes?

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: Hopefully both.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: I was, just to give awe suggestion on had a what to, when you get into the federal, I don't know the federal. But if you've gone to the city council and the city council has given you the go ahead, I don't know what the hierarchy is there in the town but there has to be a hierarchy that this recreation commission has to report to somebody. So, I would -- I would be happy to work with you on sort of just getting flew the bureaucracy of it to see who to go to. But you start there and then you have, you've got your city council and council people so -- have you gone to them.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: I have. And since 2003 --

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: And they don't seem to be able to do anything.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Well I haven't recently and I have a letter addressed to them, perhaps you could review.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: I'd be happy to talk this out with you because then what you want to do, you have your city council and you also have your state legislators, I don't know who your representative is in the state government here and who your senator is but those are the next two people that you would want to get involved in this. And hopefully, one of them is actually very, you know, interested in helping people with disabilities. And kind of just stick it, stay there. And then, I don't know if the commission, the recreation area, I mean, I don't know what laws of the federal government, I mean, the ADA doesn't cover recreation, does it?

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: Yes, it does if there are federal funds involved. If there are federal funds involved then it would provide for federal access for the Governor's commission on disability has a mediation program where they will help an individual and a town or whatever, you know, entity to try and resolve an issue in order to find it so again, when you give me, you know, your name, I'll make sure that you connect with the governor's commission.

>>>>JOHN DUPREE: I want to be sure, this is my first time here in this capacity, but I want you to know one thing, you might also find helpful if you haven't already have a thick file of all of the paperwork that you're doing so you can say, I did this, I did this, when you go to the proper authorities say this is what I've been through, I'm sure you already have this and know this but make sure you get a paper trail going. I have this mailed on this date, this is who I called on this date, keep a record of phone calls, the e-mail, whatever. Have a very precise record keeping and that will serve you down the road.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Thank you.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you, John. Bill.

>>>BILL INLOW: I think I heard you make a reference to the member or the chairperson of the recreation person telling you to go to the newspaper if you wanted to.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Yes, he was, one of the members on the commission, he was not the chairperson. That person did not show up, so.

>>>BILL INLOW: Sometimes media exposure does move even petty little politicians at the recreation commission level at the town of Hopkinton, most people in those groups, most politicians or public officials I know always want to go up higher, you know, and you can't go higher if you don't get elected. They're probably appointed, the recreation commission, are you appointed by the town council.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: I believe five-year term volunteers.

>>>BILL INLOW: Sounds to me like they're calling your bluff. What newspaper covers the town of Hopkinton?

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Westerly. Thank you. In addition to this, Congressman Langevin has attended events I've had and I've e-mailed him and have not heard back yet from his office. I'm not one to be out there pointing fingers. So I was wondering if that is the proper channel I should take at this point of just open this up to the community and let them put the phone calls in.

>>>BILL INLOW: I agree. I mean, I think you've made an incredibly appealing presentation here and I would think that, you know, most newspapers like controversial things, and this is controversial -- shouldn't be. It's emotional. And the town council won't exercise their authority over the recreation commission, it seems to me you might want to expose it to some public scrutiny through the newspaper. I think, I don't know.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: I think I was.

>>>BILL INLOW: After four or five yours, time for being nice is over, I'd be madder than hell with all that money you raised and the other money you found out about.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: I am. I'm not one to voice my anger, but I wanted to make sure this is just, properly so to make those channels.

>>>BILL INLOW: Enough is enough, I admire your patience. I wouldn't be that patience but I admire your determination. But then weren't very nice to you, so, sometimes the system doesn't work you have to jerk the system around a little bit, I think. Good luck to you.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Excellent points. Anyone else on the panel have any feedback or comments? Okay, thank you so much Marilyn, we appreciate your coming to share this afternoon. The next person listed here is James Deboer.

>>>JAMES DEBOER: I don't want to speak, but I do want to mention vote are registration cards if anyone wants to register to vote and information about the Rhode Island Disability Vote Project.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you James. At this point I would like to open it up to anyone else who did not actually sign up to speak this afternoon to share any feedback or comments that you've had on what's been shared today. This is -- I'm just -- share if you have anything to share? Okay. Any other feedback or comment from the panel members?

>>>BILL INLOW: I think it's important to note something I've heard at several other of these hearings. And some were attended much better, not that numbers are critical because quality of the comments made were great. But the point was made that some current pieces of state legislation, some good positive administrative change that is have occurred over the years frequently come from these hearings. I understand in Newport there was a big turnout and quite a bit of input. I was at the hearing in Barrington yesterday in Warwick and there were some fine comments made highlighting some issues that in fact are important to people with disabilities. And the record here is provided to the governor and to all of the members of the General Assembly. Take an issue like accessibility of playgrounds for all people, including grandparents and parents as well as children, that's an important issue. And that could be highlighted in these hearings to make a difference.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Absolutely they make a tremendous difference. A few new people stepped in. We've opened the floor if there's any questions or comments you had regarding issues for people with disabilities or their families if have you any concerns or ideas of issues you would like to see improved upon?

>>>ALEXANDRA: One of the people who joined us is a student in character in universal design, and Marilyn you were talk being your hopes for the future in at the presenters of playgrounds, can you talk about that a little bit?

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: That's Alexandra.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: As far as my hopes for the future, buy like to partake in some type of policy making to create change so that all playgrounds require complete

integration for accessibility and usability for people in wheelchairs and -- which, almost kind of falls into other children, piece of equipment meets needs as well as of other children than special needs children. Existing playgrounds and I had some ideas about what we could do to make those applications as well as new playgrounds and I expressed some concerns I have about an existing playground we're trying to modify currently and that was mainly where -- I need legal advice and support and advocacy through my local charges and higher up.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Alexandra, maybe from your perspective, you could share what you know about playgrounds and what's incorporated.

>>>ALEXANDRA: Well, it's kind of hard to say because there are no really guidelines for playgrounds or anything like that. There are suggested things that need to be done but it's very difficult to accommodate every single existing playground to an inclusive playground so it's just the whole bit. I would love to see that happen, too because I definitely, I'm into the whole idea of inclusiveness and getting the kids playing together and that would be like a dream come true but in terms of right now, I do have a lot of ADA guidelines and suggest material that I could probably share.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: That would be great.

>>>ALEXANDRA: I would love to do that.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: I just want to piggy back, you mentioned legal a few times and I didn't know if you had any thoughts on the legal?

>>>KATE BOWDEN: Well, it sounds like there's the potential for this to be a legal problem so you may want to talk to lawyers but it's not a situation where I could provide legal advice to you because it's not my area of expertise and I wouldn't give legal advice in a public forum because it would lose privilege. But if you feel, you should, I could get you numbers to the legal referral service in Rhode Island, I can't think off the top of my head of lawyers who would be well equipped to handle the problem but I'm sure there's someone out there that could do that.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: That would be great. That's a good connection. We have another participant interested in sharing.

>>>DEB GARNEAU GOLDING: Deb Golding. I would just like to add that it's becoming more and more difficult for kids to just get around in neighborhoods and towns and I think there should be safe pathways leading to all playgrounds, schools, there aren't any and now there's so many construction projection, kids are isolated and even trying to teach a kid how to ride a bike on a road, there are few sidewalks, I just find it's becoming more and more difficult to thing around unless you're in a car. Thank you.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you. For people that recently joined. Thank you.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: Have you seen the brochure called accessible Rhode Island that lists what is accessible and the Governor's commission has advocated for things like fishing dock SOS that people can get down in wheelchairs and go fishing, beach buggies so that people can get safely on a beach and a variety of other areas. So, one thing is that unfortunately we don't always know even what is available, not to say that there isn't necessary for more, I'm not saying that but again we need to know what is available.

>>>DEB GARNEAU GOLDING: Crosswalks, my son has autism and trying to teach him to be safe and there's no, you know, crosswalks any where canners how do you teach him to cross the street, or where he can cross the street safely on his own when he gets older.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: I need to advocate for crosswalks, and that's an ongoing process and you probably need to deal with your town or city to see about getting one crosswalk in one specific area. It has to be unfortunately, you know, place by place because it just doesn't happen. And in the past, unfortunately, sometimes crosswalks have been put in places where it's not safe type of thing. So, it is an individual advocacy issue.

>>>DEB GARNEAU GOLDING: There are construction projects in the town I live that are lasting for year, so a child could actually live in their neighborhoods, grow up and never be able to cross the street for their entire childhood. It doesn't make sense to me, if you're having a construction project examining on for eight or ten years there needs to be some type of accommodation.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Any feedback from the panelists to those points? Again, I think in terms of the governor's commission on disability there's an accessibility

committee and as this is reviewed bit legislative committee, all of the members who serve organizations and sponsoring agencies, you know, will be reviewing it and looking for those key areas and how the commission can move forward either with legislative priorities or suggested policy areas or further education. So, please note that your testimony will definitely be reviewed and will be, you know, looking at that also for next steps on behalf of the Commission and those agencies and organizations that are here today.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: I heard this at another meeting. There is a legislative committee and that is really the commission that decides on which issues they want to move forward legislatively and anybody can come and participate in the legislative committee and people that do come and participate and make their arguments really do get things done. So, if you would like to carry this further, not that -- it will be in the testimony, could you participate in that legislative committee. The legislative committee, I believe, it's on the web site, it meets every month. I guess that there's a hiatus in the summertime, but usually the second or third Monday of the month but on the secretary of state's web site, is that where all of the Commission meetings are -- and I would definitely recommend that you come. Because I've seen people that had specific issue that is they wanted to get addressed and they were -- this would be a key place to do it.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: And to follow up on that, when the Governor's commission advocates for something and for example there's testimony required at the state legislature, there is a need for individual citizens to come and testify. Or again if ten people write to their local legislator about a particular issue, preferably at a time it's being discussed, that make a difference in the state of Rhode Island, ten letters can make an impact.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you. I would like to open it up again to anyone joining us this afternoon, any additional questions, concerns or issues you would like to bring up to the panel? And the panel will actually be here for a little bit longer but feel free if you have had the opportunity to testify or listen, you can.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: I actually do have one more thought. I had experienced about two weeks ago parking lots at Hasbro in the Providence area where I had to park on the second floor which is fine but I had a crate of resources that I was bringing and I had to carry them all down this flight of stairs, there was no elevator. And although I do not have a handicapped -- I don't need a handicapped spot, I really felt that that whole bottom floor, one, should have, the main floor should have been all handicapped accessible for all those families'. Because if those few handicapped parking spaces are already in use, those families that still need to use handicapped parking end up parking up the second and third levels, how do they get down? There's no elevators? And I just found that --

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: That's Hasbro hospital you're talking about, not Hasbro company.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: Well, I'm sure it's an independent parking garage. But the first floor was combination of handicapped and regular parking but there was no elevator so if those spots were filled for the families, they would -- or parking in general, they would have to move up stairs but there's no elevators on the second and third floors.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: Well the Governor's commission has the accessibility committee and if you want to put in a complaint, they could explore it there is a standard for the percentage of places that you have to have for handicapped parking you know versus the general public but that shouldn't discourage you from exploring the issue and if you wanted to write a brief note to the governor's commission about the accessibility issue and see if there's a solution to it, absolutely.

>>>MARILYN MCCULLOUGH: I just, at one time I needed those parking spaces but I found it ironic because I was going to the children's hospital and that there was no elevators.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: That's another reason these forums are so important because you're raising issues in locations that maybe the commission is not aware of and in reading the testimony it can go back to the accessibility committee or whoever might be checking it out in terms of the Commission, actually go out and evaluate and look and see if the codes are not -- another question?

>>>DEB GARNEAU GOLDING: Deb Golding, I have another location I went to, actually went to with the whole accessibility thing in my head, had to go there, it's the new

Kent County Courthouse. It's a beautiful building but there are very few signs. The only direction thing I see top point new any direction is this television screen that's note a huge one and if you're trying to read, I couldn't even read it as it was flashing on what was on what floor, there were no signs to the elevators. The elevators were silent so if you were standing, by the time you get to the door opening, it would be closed on you already. There were no signs any where and there was nobody to answer any questions as to where anything was. So, I just thought that was --

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: Thank you.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Another good observation, if you. Any other comments from the panel? Again, if anyone else has any questions or concerns that you would like to share and if you have shared your concerns and -- feel free to, you don't need to stay, you can certainly leave, the panel will be here though to listen to any questions, you know, for the next hour or so. So if you have any other thoughts, we welcome your ideas and sharing.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: Why don't we take a five-minute break?

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Why don't we take a five-minute break and we'll reconvene in five minutes. Thank you.

(FIVE-MINUTE BREAK)

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: I think we're going to get set to reconvene. Okay, we're going to reconvene now. At this point, I'd like to welcome Mary Wambach who is here, too, from the Corliss Institute and has testimony to share. Welcome, Mary.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: Thank you very much. I am deaf for those who don't know me. If you can't here me, please speak up. What I'm here about today is the initiative. This was part of the division of the developmental disabilities. About six or seven months ago. First I want to say that my comment today is with all respect for the governor, administration, and legislature. I'd also like to say that I'm speaking not only as the Corliss administrator but recognized group to criminal justice, law enforcement, program workers in the area, and abuse of people with disabilities and senior citizens. There are a lot of concerns about the shared limit initiative. I also want to say there's a lot of hope about this initiative. I've spoken with many other disability leaders, individuals with and without developmental disabilities and there's an agreement that this initiative will provide an option for people with developmental disabilities who are ready to live in a more independent setting and who are able to self report when there's abuse, molestation, exploitation or neglect. The concerns for many of us though is that in the state's cost cutting endeavor that the shared living option may supplant or replace residential services that now exist in Rhode Island. I think there may be a misconception that Rhode Island has fully implemented what we call the empowerment model. And you may be familiar with that but in fact you're not, I'm going to back up. Residential programs, up until very recently were based on the medical care taking model which is one in which the professional whether a doctor, nurse, therapist, social worker, a CNA or direct support staff, it's the one that helps and the one that makes decisions. Over the past ten years, not just Rhode Island but the nation has been trying to make a shift to the empowerment model which is one in which the consumer or client makes their own decision or at any level getting more involved in the decision making. We haven't implemented that yet for many reasons. First it's still new. Second many people in the, or people that have been there for years are still not willing to accept the philosophy of the empowerment model. Third and I can speak with experience for residential programs with three shifts it's almost impossible to get all of your staff together for training because you can't cover all of the shifts when they're training people. I can tell you from my experience as a trainer and model that collecting groups at state level and at National level, it's not fully implemented. Because the dilemma between the states and between the nation, only works if every single municipality works and they don't. There are many, many municipalities in our country that are not even online yet. You're still writing notes on hand, they don't have the money, don't have the staff. I can also tell you from my law enforcement work that many first time offenders are still dealt with a felony charged and it's reduced to a misdemeanor with the understanding they will take anger management or therapy or community service but they did commit a first time felony and many of you know that the people with disabilities is, we can't always come up with enough information to stand up for a court case. They're not trained investigators to

appropriately gather the information either. So many cases of appeals of exploitation and negative do not make it to court simply for those reasons. I want to urge you with all possible strength to ask that we have public hearings on the 207ic of shared living, that we go into this very, very slowly and third that we look at what the current standards are. I know for example that there are only two annual periods during which the new provider which will be an individual as oppose today an agency has to give access to their home at the residence or property owned by the consumer. I don't think this is in most cases. If anyone would like to contact me for more information, you can contact me at the Corliss group.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: I'd like to open it up for any feedback from the panelists.

>>>BILL INLOW: Could you elaborate a little bit on the twice a year access to information, expand a little bit on that, Mary, please.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: Sure. Right now in the residential programs, there's access into the unit or apartment by appropriate manager, direct support staff, by quality -- if any report is made, under the new shared living arrangement, there are only two times annually when the agency which for example could be Corliss would be able to enter the residence of the provider who is the individual. It's a huge risk for people. For example, at Corliss groups are predominantly deaf. For a deaf person, in order to report, you have to have a land line because TTYs are not like cell phones, you can't pick them up and run with them. You need both hands to sit and type. You need to know that nobody is going to disconnect that line and you need to know that you can make a call without somebody looking over your shoulder. How can we assure that in this shared living arrangement? For people with other developmental disabilities who are not deaf, there is the same concern. How do we know that they have access to a telephone? How do we know that they can use their phone without somebody sitting there telling them what they can't say or just looking at them to make sure -- again, there are people with developmental disabilities who may welcome this initiative and who may be able to self support and figure out other ways to report if telephone doesn't work but for many people with developmental disabilities, there's a huge risk.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: I was involved with the new personal choice waiver that used to be the old PARI waiver which was modeled after, I believe the DD waiver that allows for the personal choice. And I remember sitting there going through a lot of these issues which were how, I think it was like criminal back checking on the person that the individual with disability wants to hire, how do you know who this person is? Is this person going to be someone that's not going to abuse them or something like that. I haven't really followed up on all of what has happened regarding the person choice program or the DD waiver program. Do you have any information on how successful people have been at hiring the right kind of people so that there are no abusive problems because maybe that could be a model that they could use in this arrangement, or --

>>>MARY WAMBACH: I know Leo and Lorna from way back when. I lived in Boston and I believe that there is more -- not people with developmental disabilities but wanting to hire their personal attendants and the problem there is that Rhode Island doesn't have a unit that investigates abuse.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: For those waivers either?

>>>MARY WAMBACH: No. We want to do it and the law passed but there's no funding. Right now in reality people with developmental disability under the umbrella of quality assurance have a better chance of having an investigation and having the police be brought in than people whose disabilities are not developmental.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: They do? But you're still concerned with this even though.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: Absolutely. Massachusetts's system, their system is not person but they have -- I'm trying to remember the name of it, the commission for persons with disabilities, their unit investigates personal care attendant abuse, exploitation and, I believe they have protective services for people with developmental disabilities so they have people trained to work with people with disabilities. The average patrol person, police officers, the average investigator with all respect don't know that people with disabilities can speak for ourselves. So they might go to an interpreter and say, what happened to her, or, if I was with a respected he want where I was abused, they might think, oh, she's deaf, so go to this person, they're the abuser. So there's a huge problem. We don't have a trained unit

and we don't have an identifying unit to do the investigations for people with disabilities in wheel chairs, who are deaf, who are blind. That's a good issue and thank you for bringing it up.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: But it could all be one group. I think your point, the empowerment model, you're calling it the empowerment model, people want to get out of nursing homes, live in their community, do their own thing. This issue really doesn't get discussed enough because, you know, you're too paternalistic, you're too this but there needs to be a place for protection in the development of all these things in case something happens. And you can't develop -- but I think that if you bring into the mix these other two programs that are Rhode Island's way of moving to the empowerment model, I think that everybody would say, they all need the same thing so, it's not just one issue out there. So it's now become a critical mass so to speak of people that need this unit or protective services.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: I would agree with you. I think that we already have a unit with training for people with development the disabilities and other disabilities, why not expand that. But I want to be clear, some people with other disabilities or people that are deaf might disagree with me. They might feel that those of us who don't have developmental disabilities need a separate unit. And I respect that. But I agree that we're all in this together. And there can be more cost to set up new training instead of expanding.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: Well they pent a long dime at DEA for the elderly and then finally got somebody and then they wanted to -- I know, it was the commission, didn't the commission try to make that unit for people with disabilities as well as senior citizens but then they cut the disability portion out because it was going to be too costly. Does anybody.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: I know that the governor's commission did advocate for it, I apologize, I don't know what the outcome was.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: But we could backtrack. It was only a couple years ago, really that this happened because this issue of abuse for people with disabilities in general, there's no. And I remember, who was going to handle it, was it going to be MHRH, where was this going to be handled. There's layers, there's layers of this. Thank you for bringing this up.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: I believe the biggest problem is that society still doesn't want to believe that there are people who will purposely target and find and harm people with disabilities or children for that matter. People are still shocked when there's a newspaper expose on this they say oh my God, how does it happen. And I'm one of the National specialists not because I want to be but because nobody else was doing if. There are peep that will make it their life work to find weaknesses in the system and that's why I talk about -- I don't want to say -- we haven't really yet implemented. People can move to Rhode Island from other states and we do not have a system that can find what they did in that state because it's not in the system. And people are out there who want to move from state to state and you read about them in the newspaper, say, this couple welcomes disabled children and they've adopted 18 and three foster children and I'm not saying there aren't any good people but when I see one of those stories, say, oh, no.

>>>BILL INLOW: Under the residential programs in the past, you talked about how there was very good access to the place where the people were being served. And under the shared living initiative, only twice a year. Is that a regulation or some rule that the department of mental health retardation and hospitals or whatever department is responsibility for this shared living initiative came up with?

>>>MARY WAMBACH: The shared living, it's very interesting. It shifts titles, it shifts ultimately liability because right now, for example, under Corliss and other programs, we become the provider. And we not only have to go with DD, MHRH, regulations but we have our own internal policies to back it up. In shared living, Corliss and other agencies become the agency instead of the provider and we find an individual who wants, who welcomes a consumer into their home and they become the provider. So directs are much fewer and we have standards for many of the areas. That governs this arrangement, that makes me very nervous. I'm not a big fan of paperwork but protect people that cannot protect them selves.

>>>BILL INLOW: But there are standards like guidelines rather than regulations that are binding. But who said and where is it written down that it would only be twice a year that there would be access to the home where the person lived.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: It's in the application and I don't want to sound like -- there's an obligation to provide training. There's supposed to be an inability for the consumer to contact the agency, the program staff. But in the worse case scenario.

>>>BILL INLOW: Exactly.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: That's my concern, that if you had some suspicion that there was abuse, exploitation or negative going on, could you have the authority to go into the home and deal directly with the consumer.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: So what I did, we did complete the application but I said until something changes and maybe you won't accept this, we'll only do it on our property. Why? Because if it's our property, there's a gas leak or water pipe spray, you think there might be burning in the apartment and you could go in. And, yes, we would utilize it if we felt that a person with a disability was -- but under the current arrangement, it's someone else's property.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Any other feedback or thoughts from the panel? Well, thank you, Mary.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: Thank you. I just want to add a final comment. I am absolutely not saying get rid of the shared living program. I think it has value and for many people will offer an empowerment option. But please, please do half you can to make sure that in its -- that it doesn't replace residential living services in Rhode Island. Thank you very much.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you, Mary. I'd like to open it up again to other people who are joining us this afternoon if you had any additional thoughts or feedback. Or concerns or issues to share on the topics we've talked about here today or any additional topics? Okay. I'd like to bring it back then tots panel members to see if there's anything else you feel is important to share based on some of the topics we've heard today and maybe other initiatives you've Elaina.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: I'm actually going to go get the -- well have you a copy let me just use that. Take this opportunity to share with people here about a program, again what our job at Rhodes to Independence, one of our jobs to remove barriers for people with disabilities to get good paying jobs and become self sufficient. And many of the barriers kind of begin with health care. And we in 2006, a program was implemented within the Medicaid program called the Sherlock plan. And it allows a person to make up to 50,000 a year and buy into the Medicaid program because many times a person is concerned that had they won't be able to get health insurance or their employer won't provide health insurance. And this brochure, what we've done is looked at another work incentive program called 1619 A and B and that's if you're on SOS. So many kids are on SOS and as they move from graduating out of high school into either going to college or going into work, they can actually and then they're on SOS, they can actually move onto a paying job and parents and everybody doesn't have to worry about them losing their health care which is the Medicaid program because they would continue on in the Medicaid program paying in a certain kind of premium which isn't as high as paying into Blue Cross and you would still keep the benefits. So this little brochure explains the little road you take as you move and you don't have to worry about not having health care coverage because you want to get a good paying job and you're going to lose your Medicaid or potentially lose your Medicare. We have a person in our office who just counsels on the Sherlock plan, but the department of ORS has a wonderful unit there led up by Roberta Green and she has two benefits counselor who is are important people to talk to and for your different agencies to know about them because they have the accurate information. There's a lot of program that is somebody with a disability could be on, all with very different income eligibility requirement SOS when you're thinking about going to work you want to be sure you're looking at your full package of benefit answer what you would potentially lose, what you couldn't lose but on the health care front just to know that we really have addressed the health care issue and not to worry about that and not stifle people that really want to move ahead and get jobs and work more hours because they're afraid. And we're really trying to change that attitude with health care providers a lot of peep who will are in the disability advocacy world know this but sometimes you wind up with some paternalistic health care employer that is look at somebody with a disability and say, oh, got to be on social security disability because otherwise you won't get everything you need. There really is a -- not just an empowerment model but the disabilities for people because of technology and they also

have really -- I feel like I'm the little rah-rah cheer leader for ORS these days but they really have accessibility and devices -- there's amazing things that people can do with amazing disabilities because of the technology that has come about in our lifetime. So I just wanted to focus people's attention on that and anything that you can be doing as a, you know as a parent and a lot of the great stuff you're doing with trying to get playgrounds and stuff, same people that need to understand that kids can play inclusively in playgrounds need to understand these kids are not limited in being able to get jobs and make good livings and become architects, right?

>>>ALEXANDRA: Right.

>>>>JOHN DUPREE: I just wanted to share something that happened at the Providence center, my name is John Dupree. Something at the Providence center, the past two years there have been cutbacks, the department of MHRH, cutbacks affecting the meant am health consumers Medicare only at the Providence -- Medicare only and that is that they are not being allowed at this point, it's my understanding, they're not allowed a nurse or case manager, only a contact person. I don't know even know what that is. I want to tell you something, I've been in the mental health system for, going on 19 years and overall, basically I've had a nurse and case manager and doctor. And without those people, their bedrock support and foundation for recovery. We do need these things and other centers around this state except for the Providence center to my knowledge have made the cutbacks accordingly. But at the Providence center try to fund it and work it out so people can be kept on longer and could have more services. You know, find a way to make it work. And this is going to have a grave impact because plane people, I see more and more, my friends who are hurt, who will have their lives impacted negatively and it is a grave situation and I know the final situation, federally, locally, statewide, it's tough but I just had to make it known here that some things are hanging that can hopefully be turned around at some point soon because I'm just -- I don't know what to do. I just found this out Tuesday and I'm just kind of shocked.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you John, anyone on the panel have any thoughts for John?

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: That's a very serious issue. It's going to be very complicated and I don't know, you know, what planning is involved in that. I just wanted to follow up very briefly to Elaine's, thank you Elaine. The work incentive counselors which is what they're called rather than benefit counselors now, they also provide informational sessions periodically about going to work when you're on SOS or SSDI. And in August, there's going to be such a presentation in Spanish because one of the issues that we need to deal with in Rhode Island is accessibility for individuals who are disabled who don't speak English. So I have a flier about that and that also has the phone number, how to contact the two people who will be the work incentive counselors if you would like to get furthered information or call them. I should also mention our fact sheets on the Sherlock are also in Spanish. That's one language, there are others.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: I think we had a comment.

>>>DEB GARNEAU GOLDING: I want today back up further to what Elaine was saying. My son is only in elementary school but having a child with a disability and having them included in a classroom, so if we're talking about inclusion and jobs and all that is corrects I wonder why the department of education isn't, wasn't on the panel that I was on. Were they invited? And I don't like to Special Ed. indication because I believe it should be education for all kids. Because that's part of the process to get a job to know that these things are available to you when you're a kid.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: Good point.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: Just to -- actually, this was brought up.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Is this feedback for Deb?

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: , yes, this was brought up, was it yesterday? All of these are going together but yesterday in Warwick, there was a student bringing it up. They have transition, is it called transition council, transition coordinators. I'm not sure why the department of Ed, maybe -- I don't know why, but there are a lot of people within the department of education that deal with all of this. And the person yesterday was really talk being how in each of the different school systems, the same child could exist in each school system and get very different services and that is really a huge problem. It was something, you know, I wasn't aware of until actually

last year because I thought, well, you have the idea and that's going to filter down and it really does not.

>>>DEB GARNEAU GOLDING: It's town to town, school to school.

>>>ELAINA GOLDSTEIN: I don't know under what rubric it belongs secretary second if you can get children with all their -- you can have a whole generation that think people with disabilities are no different.

>>>BILL INLOW: Your point, I guess Miss Golden, is the department of education should be represented here since so many issues are he will vent to children and ultimately to adults with disability. I think that's a really good point and we ought to have that in the record that certainly the department of education ought to be fully engaged with these public hearings and with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities and listening to citizens from throughout the state about concerns for children and other people with disabilities, you're right. Thank you. We'll follow up on that for sure.

>>>DEB GARNEAU: And the department of health and retardation, MHRH but just around the department of health, we have a few initiatives happening. It seems like this is more turning into networking time so this is a good time to get this out. One of the things we're trying to do is look at children that are in Special Ed. or that have disabilities that are in schools and encouraging them around health promotion, wellness and really getting them empowered to handle their health care on a go forward -- helping with that transition so we have a few initiatives we're working with the academy of pediatrics and looking at, with the department of education and looking at some of the resource that is can happen around parent education and youth education through RIPIN and transition centers and that kind of thing. So it seemed important to put that out there. And the other thing that we are looking at as well is, an accessibility study/survey, we're starting that with a first hand, for a self assessment for the YMCAs to look at their facilities and their parking and their equipment and accessibility and friendliness of the site itself and we're looking to partner with the commission as well and looking at some of the physical facilities for medical services. So that's a plan to really enforce that because there's a lot out there around homes and buildings and different public places but not much of it is enforced and the A technical assistance that some of the providers may be getting is smaller. So we are hoping to make an impact in that area.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Great. Thank you. I just want to open it up again there's any other comments. I think we'll take another five-minute recess at this point.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: I just want to ask, did all of you bring brochures?

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: They're on the outside table.

(FIVE MINUTE BREAK)

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: I'd like to invite our panelists back to the table. At this point, I would like to invite Barbara Torres, who is interested in speaking this afternoon. Barbara is from family voices at RIPIN, welcome Barbara.

>>>BARBARA TORRES: Hi everybody, I'm Barbara and there was a concern, I myself have severe asthma and so does my child. He's five years old, he's getting ready to go to school and I have other kids, I let them take the school bus and I've noticed that the school busses, the drivers are smoking before they pick up the kids so that's a big concern because if imp to let my son go on the bus he may have an asthma attack before he gets to the school so that's thing I wanted to share, there are a few parents willing to talk about it if up want them to come and talk about that issue.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you, Barbara. I'll toss it over to Bill, I think.

>>>BILL INLOW: I work for Rhode Island Public Transit Authority, RIPTA. Obviously we have a rule that says no smoking on the bus. By passengers or drivers. And I am fully aware that some drivers, before they get people on the bus, smoke cigarettes on the bus. We try our best to enforce that rule, discipline the driver. It's, you know, again, it's a rule and we do try and enforce it. It's hard when -- are you talking about RIPTA buses or school busses or both?

>>>BARBARA TORRES: To be honest, it's both because when I was younger, I had an asthma attack because of it and I was in a hospital for two weeks.

>>>BILL INLOW: A regular --

>>>BARBARA TORRES: Yes, a RIPTA bus and now it's the school busses and it's hard to have a child that has severe asthma. I'd rather walk him toe school if I have to.

>>>BILL INLOW: I wish I could tell you that there was an easy answer for that, obviously. Again, we have the rule if you catch people smoking on the bus, they get disciplined. What we would really like to do is teach the drivers that they're -- they can hurt other people in addition to their own health by smoking on the bus and we would hopefully have people working for us who care about your child and other people with respiratory issues and people in general. And you wouldn't smoke on the bus because it's the wrong thing to do. Unfortunately, people who smoke cigarettes, many of them are addicted to smoking and it is very difficult to get them to stop. Ideally, if they would at least step off the damn bus and smoke and smoke the cigarette off the bus because we try to recognize that our drivers who do smoke are addicted to nicotine and so we try to schedule a time that they can step off the bus and at least smoke out in the air and not on the bus. Some of the drivers -- we have 400 drivers at RIPTA and most are good and decent people and some are absolute jerks and they just smoke on the bus because they want to. They smoke on the bus and I regret it but what you can do, I can give you a number to call, 781-9400, and ask for customer service and I would urge you or anybody else to report any driver they see smoking on a regular RIPTA bus or school bus any time and we will try our best to work where that driver to try to prevent that from happening. Thanks for speaking up.

>>>KATE BOWDEN: Do you have jurisdiction over school busses?

>>>BILL INLOW: No I'm just talking about RIPTA, you -- I would call the school, I guess, and complain about any school bus driver you see smoking on the bus any time whether or not there are kids on there because you're right, the smoke hangs in the air and can trigger an asthma attack which can be very serious, right, not just an inconvenience, not just a child with a serious asthma problem doesn't like the smell of the smoke, it's a dangerous situation for that person.

>>>BARBARA TORRES: I'm pretty sure, well not pretty sure but some school bus drivers own their own buses and if you own your own bus and then work for the school, I don't know whether it's the school's -- do the schools have their own buses.

>>>BILL INLOW: A lot of schools subcontract.

>>>BARBARA TORRES: Especially the short buses, Special Education buses.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: It may be that you need to talk about to your Special Ed. indication director in the School Department because really you're asking for a special need because of the disability. And leave it up to the special Ed director. Again, I don't know, I'm suggesting you should explore that. I'm not saying for sure.

>>>SUSAN SHEPHERDSON: My name is Susan Shepherdson. I wanted to ask if that phone number, that phone call would be confidential, to customer service if someone made the phone call in you do not have to give your name if you give a complaint to at RIPTA. We would hope you might and give us your phone number too so that we can follow up, tell you whether we did something or not but you do not have to identify yourself same I think one thing about parent social security they know when their children leave the house they're vulnerable to the world and we always hope as marry said that people care for our children and there wouldn't be retribution but I think it's scary for parents to see their kids going out anyway, so that they wouldn't be in the position of their child receiving less than kind care. What made me think it was, I live across the street from an elementary school and I'm in the city so there's police out there making sure the police are safe and my city has a strict rule against smoking and the police officer who sits out there, he smokes cigarette after cigarette and throws the butts on the ground and one day I thought, I should say something to him and then I thought, what am I nuts, let him smoke, that's what made me think of it has anything to do with anything, just a side bar. I know we do feel our children are very vulnerable when they leave our care.

>>>JAMES DEBOER: You said smoking is not allowed by any driver or passenger on -- is that only RIPTA.

>>>BILL INLOW: There is a rule at RIPTA.

>>>JAMES DEBOER: On a school bus in I don't know about school busses, at RIPTA, no one is supposed to smoke on the bus any time, any where, customer or driver, it's a rule frequently broken by drivers especially when there are no passengers on the bus to report on them. But we're working hard to try to discipline the drivers that need to be disciplined and inspire the drivers by telling them things, when you smoke on a bus and the smoke hangs around can be harmful to somebody with asthma or another disability. But in terms of school busses, I don't know that there's a rule but I would imagine that most school systems would certainly not allow drivers to smoke

while passengers are on the school bus and I would imagine also that they probably shouldn't, I would assume they have rule that is they are not supposed to smoke on a bus even when there aren't any gold there are also bus monitors, too so potentially two people smoke willing.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: I know they're looking into putting cameras on the RIDE buses, is something similar being thought about with the other busses.

>>>BILL INLOW: Recent state law and we've been working on it for a while even before the law mandated it but a recent state law that probably came out of one of these hearing a couple years ago, incidentally, that talked about vulnerable people being on the RIDE vans and sometimes being alone with one driver and that's a very vulnerable situation. In fact we have had I think so dens where there have been arrests and prosecutions for a sexual exploitation as well as other inappropriate, illegal behavior by a driver on the body much a person with a disability. So, we are installing in the next couple years videotape cameras, five, on each RIDE van that will at least tape, it's not live into some center with cameras but it will at least tape the activities in and around each RIDE van and then those, all, the videotape cameras will be installed in the next couple years on all RIDE vans and we're going to try to get the money to put cameras on all big regular RIPTA buses, as well. To document when something really happens that's wrong so we can prosecute people but more importantly to inhibit that kind of inappropriate behavior in the first place.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: First I want to say that sounds wonderful. Second I want to ask if you can make sure that the department doesn't have that on others because often they record and rerecord and nobody looks at them everyday and when you try to look at what happened last week, Wednesday, it's already been rerecorded and you can't go back.

>>>BILL INLOW: The equipment we're installing on the RIDE vans, when a RIDE van comes in at the end of a day, it down loads automatically, wirelessly into a data bank. We keep it -- you can setup the system to keep it 30 days, 45/60, so many days. Again, no one is going to look at it unless there's an incident reported and then we'll go back and look at it to document it I'm not saying somebody is going to sit there and monitor the safety of every passenger on a RIDE van all the time but it will rerecord, it doesn't rerecord because it dumps the information out every time when a RIDE van comes out at the end of the day into a big central storage area. Everyday, it stores into a massive storage system, wirelessly in RIDE central.

>>>PATRICIA RYHERD: In response to the issue of confidentiality, and, I think the best thing to do is try and prevent the problem from happening rather than after it happens as far as the asthma situation and the school bus. So again, you can contact, for example, Special Ed. indication department in August if your child is going to start using a bus in September. So it's always better if you can prevent it so that they know that on this specific bus, there is a child with asthma. Doesn't always eliminate it but it's more likely to prevent it.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you Pat.

>>>MARY WAMBACH: I don't know about Rhode Island, in terms of retaliation to anyone. I don't know if Rhode Island has -- it's a funny thing about English because it sounds like it means better but it means worse, in some states they have they have something called enhanced sentencing for any crimes involving children, people with disabilities or seniors and that might be a -- to retaliation because it can be kept up to a higher class with worst punishment and that can be added and it is in some states, for crimes of retaliation related to initial crimes involving a child or person with disability or senior citizen.

>>>KATE MCCARTHY-BARNETT: Thank you, Mary. At this point are there any other comments or question from those of you who are joining us today? Any initial feedback from our panel members? Okay then I would just like to thank those of you who are joined us today, thank you for area testimony and thoughts and questions you have shared. Please know that the Governor's Commission on Disabilities and those sponsoring agencies and organizations will be reviewing your testimony and looking at it for potential legislative or policy changes. And if you're interested in following that process, we welcome your feedback and you can check out the Governor's Commission on Disabilities web site as well as the number path had given earlier the 462-0100 to keep in touch of when the legislative committee meetings are meeting and we just want to thank you for coming today and also thank the panel members for sharing your time and expertise for those of us here this afternoon. So, thank you.