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Dear Friends & Supporters

At 1:00 PM on Monday, December 16, 2013, the Assembly Human Services Committee will be considering a bill, The Group Home Fire Safety Act, A1843. This bill requires that all group homes have sprinkler systems installed within 4 years.

CAU, the Association for the Betterment of Citizens with Disabilities (ABCD), the NJ Association of Community Providers (NJACP), the Arc of NJ, the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities (NJCDD), Department of Human Services (DHS)/Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), and the Supported Housing Association (SHA) all oppose this bill. We are asking for all supporters of Community Access Unlimited and our mission to assist individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities live independently in their own homes to contact the list of the members of the Human Services Committee and oppose this bill.

There are a number of reasons for opposition of this bill:

- Due to licensing that are put in place through DHS/DDD and OPIA ratios of staff to individuals served ensure the safe evacuation of all residents in less than 3 minutes. A recent sampling of an unannounced overnight fire drills conducted by state and local fire officials throughout the state resulted in 93% of the drills being successful. The unsuccessful drills were for a variety of reasons, one of which was that residents did not want to get up in the middle of the night knowing that it was a drill.
- According to the National Fire Protection Association, the incidence of fire in a therapeutic residence for people with disabilities is .0017% - one of many compelling statistics. People with developmental disabilities living in a community facility have substantially less incidences of structural fires and substantially fewer deaths, when compared to the general population.
- The fact is, if we can be soundly assured that people can get out of their homes in 3 minutes with or without assistance, the over-investment in 'fool-proofing' fire suppression systems will be over-prescriptive, wasteful and shift limited resources away from human capital and the advancement of human rights.
- The making of special rules and additional and unnecessary requirements for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is not only unjust but will serve to sorely limit housing choices. It is not clear that the individuals with developmental disabilities living in group homes want this 'protection.' Has anyone asked those individuals what they would like to see the state's valuable resources go toward?

Join us in opposing this bill. If possible, please contact any legislature below or in your specific district and register your opposition to the bill.

Sponsors of the Bill:

Patrick Deignan Jr.  
John Burzichelli  
Co-Sponsors:  
Jerry Green  
Nelson Albano  
Vincent Prieto  
John Wisniewski  
Peter J. Barnes III  
Mila Jasey  
Shavonda Sumter  
John McKeon

Members of the Assembly Human Services Committee:

Valerie Huttle, Chair  
Cleopatra Tucker  
Mary Pat Angelini  
Joseph Cryan  
Angel Fuentes

Thank you for your help in our mission and have a great weekend!

Community Access Unlimited