

9 August 2021

THE ARC EASTERN CONNECTICUT – SERVING FAMILIES AND PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES FOR 69 YEARS

Dear Members of the Committee Reviewing Comments and Feedback on **Public Act 21-58**:

My name is Kathleen Stauffer and I live in Mystic. I am Chief Executive officer of **The Arc Eastern Connecticut**, and I am writing to call attention to omissions in **Section 65**, which establishes a grants program that targets only “first-time redemption center owners and those that are locally-owned, minority-owned and women-owned businesses.”

1. WHY INCLUSION OF EXISTING REDEMPTION CENTERS IS SO IMPORTANT. The Arc ECT Redemption Center does far more than keep Connecticut’s beautiful landscape clean. **The Redemption Center serves as a vocational training ground for people with Intellectual Disabilities, providing critical skills and on-the-job experience at minimum wage** on their way to landing jobs with community employers and greater personal independence. As the non-profit operator of the only non-retail redemption center in northeastern Connecticut, we urge you to reconsider the establishment of the parameters in Section 65b and **include existing redemption centers in rural areas** where a lack of **public transportation, long and impractical walking distances, and low population density contribute to making the current redemption center a vital part of an area’s recycling success.** In fact, the language of Section 65b does state that “redemption centers AND those that are locally owned” etc. WILL be included in the grant process. Eliminating the ability of existing centers to access funds that will upgrade their equipment and augment services to meet the marked increased demand (as emphasized in the August 9 Stakeholders Meeting) is shortsighted and harmful. In addition, it translates into far more work for those agencies that license and regulate facilities; why not assist a successful existing facility whose permits and approvals are already in place?

2. WHO WE ARE. The Arc Eastern Connecticut provides a variety of supports and services for approximately **800 people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families.** We operate four micro-enterprises that provide **vocational training to people with IDD** as they work toward greater self-sufficiency, independence, and jobs with local businesses. One of our most successful microenterprises is our **bottle and can redemption center in Woodstock.** Participant employees earn minimum wage while gaining critical skills in customer service, inventory, sorting, computer skills, cleaning, and more.

3. UPDATED FACILITIES WILL BE ABLE TO MEET NEW DEMAND. **Opening the grants program to existing centers would allow our redemption center to obtain newer equipment** that can process up to **900,000 pieces per month** (increasing current capacity by 759,000, or 300%). This translates to additional jobs for people with IDD, positions the center for further recycling demand as of 2023, and provides increased income which will help sustain this important community program.

4. PLEASE REMEDY THIS INEQUITY. To allow for the establishment of new centers, while denying those existing ones, which have held on in a climate that has seen far too many shut their doors, is to do a disservice to the communities in which they operate. **Please clarify the language of Section 63 to INCLUDE existing redemption centers in the grant program.**

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
Kathleen Stauffer
Chief Executive Officer