

# Harrisburg Presentation

March 21, 2016

Good morning Chairperson and Friends:

My name is Graynle D. Edwards, Ed.D.

I am here for the purpose of securing adequate financial support for dependent intellectually challenged citizens of seriously ill and deceased Parents.

I am a 79 year old parent of a 54 year old son who suffered brain damage shortly after birth and have acquired considerable knowledge of the struggle related to special needs advocacy .for a period of almost sixty years.

His mother and I have a history of advocacy to ensure a meaningful life in his community since 1975 where we challenged the school system to provide a free and adequate education for our eight year old son. During the ensuing years our advocacy manifested itself in a variety of ventures:

1. As a lifeguard in college, I gave swimming lessons to cerebral palsy individuals prior to my son's birth.
2. Demonstrated both locally and in Harrisburg on behave of intellectually challenged citizens for adequate support services.
3. As a school administrator, I was recognized for providing an atmosphere where all of our special needs secondary students were treated with respect and integrated into all of the school activities without prejudice.
4. Assisted parents in special education disputes who had either no advocates or those who were poorly prepared.
5. Served on local and statewide boards that advocated for meaningful life experiences for the disabled covering a period of almost twenty years.
6. Addressed our concerns before a Pennsylvania legislative committee in the past

7. Coordinated Parent Support Groups in providing information and services in Philadelphia, PA target areas.

The above activities are demonstrations of our commitment to enabling all citizens to live a full and enjoyable life within the community of relatives and friends.

We have tried to afford our son with the same opportunities as evidenced by his extensive traveling in many major cities including Toronto, Canada and West of the Mississippi, participating in Special Olympics, and an assortment of local social, sporting and entertainment events throughout his life.

In recent years there have been a reduction in some of these activities due our aging, and we are having to come to grips with the prospects as to what will happen when we are gone .While some dependent adults have relatives who are willing to take on the enormous task of caring, there is a much larger group who have no such safety net.

Many of us are approaching the senior years, and more parents are approaching 75-80 years and older. One needs to just review the trepidations that so many elderly parents, including ourselves, are experiencing because of the limitations of such safety nets that are committed to providing a full and meaningful life for their adult children.

Going on the website and downloading "autistic Daddy", you will be able to review the many testimonies of parents who are traumatized over the prospect of their child's care when they no longer can. We are hopeful that our children continue a meaningful life in the community, and are deeply concern with what happens when we are gone. We have no desire to have our children warehoused in institution because we have, collaborating with social welfare professionals, spent our adult lives eliminating most of these places.

Who within the State legislative bodies and administration can parents rely on to addressed this present and real concern. The anticipated need for resources to address the needs of consumers who have lost parents and no relatives to care for them are extremely urgent. There are local and statewide state agencies that can provide critical data to substantiate the urgency of this matter.

We need a legislative declaration that these needs will be addressed with all deliberate speed and with sufficient resources. A lot of anguish and despair can be avoided with an expeditious response to this critical matter.

Thank you for your attention.

Have a good day.