

Good morning. My name is Kay Stambler and I am here to testify about the importance of Joint Resolution H. 7, which addresses the continuing impact the eugenics sterilization movement in the State of Vermont. My history includes being a parent of a child, a public guardian of and a friend of many adults who are developmentally disabled and were and are still impacted by the past acceptance of eugenics in Vermont and in our country. I am on the Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council and I have been coming to this statehouse for nearly 50 years to support the rights of individuals who happen to be developmentally disabled.

I want to tell you about two situations that I experienced as the result of the prejudice that was generated and still exists due to the eugenics movement and the continuation of devaluing people judged not as able as others here in Vermont and beyond. We now call this judgement, ablism.

The first, happened when Fred, for whom I was a public guardian, was quite sick and I brought him to the hospital. It turned out that his kidneys were not working properly and after many tests, the urologist said to me, and I quote, "he is a definite candidate for dialysis but we usually don't do that for this kind of people." I started to object and the doctor said that when he had time he, we could talk. I said quickly "OK, but put him on dialysis immediately and then we will talk." The dr said "of course," Fred was put on a dialysis plan and that was the end of our talking. Fred was a person who was a definite part of his community, known to lots of folks who stopped and chatted with him when he walked about town. He had a passion for life that was contagious and I am so glad he got to live out his life with the medical support he needed.

The second happened to Priscilla, a teenager, whose nickname was Cilla, and for whom I was also a public guardian. She had been placed in Brandon Training School when she was a baby, spent her childhood there and then moved to a group home in the community when she was about 14. When I first met Cilla, she looked at me and said, in a questioning voice, "Mom?" I soon learned that she asked this of every woman she met--she was always looking for her mom.

I heard of Cilla's drowning accident when a doctor called, told me of the accident and said that she was brain dead and they needed my permission to remove her body parts. I said to get Cilla to the medical center right away and the doctor said that she would ride in the ambulance to make sure that she was alive when she reached the hospital.

At the medical center, I asked for a neurologist to assure that Priscilla was really brain dead. After testing, which the medical folks around me saw as useless, the neurologist said that she was not brain dead! It took a month for her to recover enough and for us to find a home that could care for her now that she had many health needs and during that time a few of the doctors around Cilla actually said to me that it was a waste for her to be alive. Though she never regained her full abilities, she was able to go to a home, a real home with a mother and a father. And for the first time in her life, when she called "Mom" there was a mother figure who responded. And when I was visiting, each time Cilla called "Mom" and there was a response, Cilla looked at her Mom and looked at me and smiled from ear to ear.

Your Committee is now on the precipice of taking a step, by passing H. 7, to say to all who still feel the results of the eugenics movement, that it should not have happened and that we can look to the future as valued human beings whatever our abilities. I want to thank you for having the understanding to do so.

There is a third story is about my daughter, Marni. Which I want to share with you, but I do not have the time to read it to you today. So I will leave it with you attached to the other two.

When Marni was born, she was diagnosed with arthrygroposis, a disease where her joints, knees and arms, were frozen. Her arms, legs and feet were put in casts which were changed every 2 weeks to gradually straighten them out. Also, every two weeks when Marni heard the noise of the saw cutting through the casts to take them off, she went into spells like seizures where she vomited everything in her stomach. Over time, Marni grew weak and finally, when she was 3 months old, her pediatrician, Dr Singer, put her in the hospital and told my husband and me that we had to, and I quote, "let nature take its course." We were fortunate that on the very

week-end after Marni went into the hospital, Dr Singer was away and the on call pediatrician, Dr. Mace Goldfarb came in. He asked if we had been told about Marni's head growth and her disability, we said no. He told us that her head was growing slowly and she was most probably going to have a low IQ. I said, "what can we do to help her live." A pediatric surgeon was called in. Marni was so weak the doctors didn't know if she would survive surgery, but that was her only hope. It turned out that Marni's intestines were tied in a knot that tightened each time she heard the sound of the saw cutting off her casts. Her intestines were fine, the surgeon untied the knot, Marni lived, we switched pediatricians and when we went back to the office, Dr. Singer's name was no longer on the door.