

**Remarks by Ruth Grobe, Secretary, Citizens Coalition For Equal Access (CC=A)**

State Rep. Mike Demicco represents a district that includes New Horizons Village in Unionville, an independent living facility for people with severe disabilities. In 2005, as Chair of the Farmington Human Relations Commission, I scheduled a Commission meeting at New Horizons to hear from the 101 residents about any problems they might have in receiving equitable treatment in our town. There was so much to talk about that over time, a number of New Horizons residents have joined up to engage in advocacy with other allies in the town of Farmington, including the person who succeeded me as Chair of the Town's Human Relations Commission. The advocates call themselves the Citizens Coalition For Equal Access or CC=A, and healthcare equity has been a prominent concern from the very inception of this small, grassroots organization. Key supporters have been Dr. Ray Elling, a retired founding faculty member at the UConn School of Medicine, and Dr. Peter Deckers, the retired CEO of UConn Health. In the past few years, the issue of accessible medical diagnostic equipment has also been adopted as a legislative priority by the Connecticut Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance, a statewide group of parents, self-advocates, and providers.

CC=A self-advocates have been sharing stories similar to the ones you will hear today FOR MANY YEARS, but our advocacy didn't get much traction until Dr. Mary Beth Bruder (from whom you will hear shortly) introduced us to medical students who were part of the Disability Interest Group at the UConn School of Medicine. In their hands-on experience in various medical facilities, the students had observed patients with disabilities receiving substandard care because of the lack of accessible medical diagnostic equipment. They confirmed what our advocates with disabilities had been saying for years, and even corrected the assumption that they could receive complete and thorough physicals while remaining in their wheelchairs.

Before I introduce our other speakers and in anticipation of an issue that will no doubt come up in our discussion today, I would like to quote Judy Heumann, the brave woman with a disability who was a key organizer of the advocacy movement that resulted in the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act. We recently lost Ms. Heumann, but her words live on:

“The truth is, the status quo loves to say no. It is the easiest thing in the world to say no, especially in the world of business and finance. But for the first time we were discussing civil rights, and no other civil rights issue has ever been questioned because of the cost.” CC=A advocates would submit to you that it costs even more in the long run if we fail to provide equitable preventative health care to people with disabilities.

You will now be hearing from the following speakers:

Dr. Lisa Iezzoni

Dr. Cindy Miller

Dr. Mary Beth Bruder

Andy Bate

Valerie Rumpf