

## **The Importance of recognizing the spectrum of need and the reality of addressing these needs**

My name is Meri Krassner and I am the mother of Daniel who is 27. Daniel is a delightful, charming, ambulatory and verbal young man. He has severe scoliosis, eccentric vision, a heart murmur and cognitive issues. He cannot negotiate the world by himself, he cannot take a shower by himself, brush his teeth, make meals, even wipe himself . He has to have someone with him at all times.

He lives with us in an apartment here in Manhattan and he goes to a day program which he really enjoys and is the right fit for him . But this cannot go on forever, we will not live forever and not knowing where he will live and who will take care of him is an open question that hangs over us every day of our lives

The best place for him is in a group residence, which in NYC is usually means an apt. or a house where you interact with your neighbors, in the building, on the street, in the stores, on public transportation. One of the things people dislike about the city is that there is no anonymity. Which is why it is ridiculous to claim that current group homes “are not in the community”

There are some who can live more independently and it is great to help them to do so, but it is not the majority by a long shot.

And sadly, all of us become more dependent when we age.

Housing choices must reflect reality, and the list being put together that is due Feb. 2016 will not include those who were not on the original list, which means it will be incomplete which will not allow for accurate planning . Housing choices must reflect the reality of the level of need and level of ability of the people

involved, the reality of housing costs in this city, the reality that a larger residence may deliver economies of scale, the reality that staff needs to be trained in many many things, the reality that you can't just put any people together – the vulnerable must not be with the predatory, the reality that back fills are not enough.

Painting a picture that a majority of people can live in their own apts., having a job, traveling to the job by themselves, managing their finances with a very light support system -if you are on the transformation panel, you know from your own experiences, your own work, that that is ridiculous.

Painting the picture – that everyone is in their own apartment with a great roommate is the same as doing nothing for most. There may be some who are over-served but it is not the rule, it is the exception.

I don't think that the bulk of the agencies that serve the disabled have anything to apologize for, they should be proud of what they've created because the system has served families well for so long. It is disturbing to see them pilloried, and hard not to suspect that it is happening for less than honorable reasons.

I implore the Panel to plan for the real world, for our very real family members who need services that reflect the enormous range of needs and abilities in the intellectual and developmental disabilities population.

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