At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, hospitals in CT began implementing strict “no visitor” policies to contain the spread of the virus. Most hospitals had exceptions to these policies for things such as pediatric care, labor & delivery, and end of life support, but apart from only 3 hospitals, CT did not have an exception for people with disabilities. Several other states, including our COVID-19 tri-state partners New York & New Jersey, took official action to develop comprehensive hospital visitation policies which protected the rights of people with disabilities. But inexplicably, and despite a huge public outcry, the State of Connecticut failed to do so, causing months of extreme and unnecessary anguish and trauma for thousands of your constituents with disabilities and their families.

As a result, The Arc Connecticut and other advocacy organizations, were forced to file a Civil Rights complaint with the US Office of Health & Human Services demonstrating that people with disabilities in Connecticut were being:

- Denied effective communication
- Subjected to unnecessary use of physical and chemical restraints
- Deprived the right to make informed decisions and provide informed consent
- Subjected to unequal access to treatment

In June 2020, through the efforts of the OCR and the CT Attorney General, the Connecticut Department of Public Health finally issued an order mandating hospitals and outpatient facilities to allow people with disabilities to have a support person accompany them.

This was a shameful chapter in CT’s treatment of our residents with disabilities that must never be repeated. We believe it is critical for the State of Connecticut to codify the protections outlined in the DPH order regarding visitation for patients with disabilities, to ensure that the civil rights of people with disabilities are not violated in this manner again. We will be asking legislators to pass legislation to that effect.