



Justice. Community. Inclusion.

Disability Rights Connecticut

“Connecticut’s protection and advocacy system”

846 Wethersfield Avenue
Hartford, CT 06114

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 10, 2018

CONTACT: Gretchen Knauff
Gretchen.Knauff@disrightsct.org
(860) 608-2090

Disability Rights Connecticut (DRCT) is aware of the comments reportedly made by a Cromwell City Councilman during a recent executive session. According to sources quoted in the Middletown Press, during the meeting, the Councilman used the word “retarded” as a derogatory slur. As the “protection and advocacy” (P&A) for the State of Connecticut, DRCT is dedicated to improving the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, their families, and our community as a whole. As an agency dedicated to identifying and eliminating the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities, DRCT was disappointed to hear about the Councilman’s alleged statement. DRCT issues this press release in hopes that it will clarify why it is inappropriate and disrespectful to use the word “retarded,” (“the R-word”) or any word that demeans, disparages, or disrespects an individual on the basis of his or her disability.

Best Buddies, the world’s largest organization dedicated to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of the 200 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), along with The Special Olympics, and their supporters have an ongoing effort, “Spread the Word to End the Word” which addresses this issue. The movement started in 2009 and according to a fact sheet in its resources, seeks to “inspire respect and acceptance through raising the consciousness of society about the R-word and how hurtful and disrespectful words can be toward people with intellectual disabilities.” As “Spread the Word to End the Word” recognizes, “[r]espectful and inclusive language is essential to the movement for the dignity and humanity of people with intellectual disabilities.” You can find more information about the harmful effects of the “R-word,” at: <https://www.r-word.org/r-word-effects-of-the-word.aspx>.

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities have had to overcome negative stereotypes for far too long. Since the Spread the Word to End the Word movement began, over 770,000 people have pledged to “support the elimination of the derogatory use of the R-word from everyday speech and promote the acceptance and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities.” In 2007, at the insistence of disability advocacy groups like People First of Connecticut, Connecticut lawmakers recognized the importance of eliminating the use of the R-word when they officially changed the name of the Department of Mental Retardation to the Department of Developmental Services. In recognition of the stigma surrounding the “R-word,” all other references to the term “retardation” have also been removed from Connecticut statutes. The federal government also began replacing the term “mental retardation” with “intellectual disability in health, education, and labor policy in 2010.

DRCT urges Cromwell City Council to take the pledge to “Spread the Word to End the Word,” to recognize the harmful effects that the R-word has for individuals with disabilities, and to promote inclusion, respect and acceptance of individuals with all types of disabilities.