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Testimony regarding Raised Bill No. 498, An Act Authorizing Bonds of the State for A Facility in Manchester for Persons with Developmental Disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Raised Senate Bill No. 498. My name is David Sheridan. I am a Director of the Town of Manchester, and have been so since 2001. I come to testify today, however, in my capacity as a citizen of this state and a resident of the Town of Manchester. I testify today in strong, unconditional support of Senate Bill No. 498.

There are many here today, many who have spoken already and some who will speak after me, who can tell you more eloquently than I can about MARC, Inc.'s demonstrated need for a new facility. That is the bricks and mortar perspective. My perspective is that of someone who sees this as an investment in human capital, an investment in the betterment of the human condition, which should be the ultimate goal of this – or any - government.

Every citizen of this state needs to feel comfort and joy in their lives – and citizens with disabilities must ultimately rely on us to help them reach that place. It is a moral responsibility which, sadly, for generations we neglected to fulfill. MARC has been part of changing that. MARC has worked in the Town of Manchester for over 56 years to help mentally disabled individuals create a meaningful life. MARC creates a happy and safe environment for these citizens. MARC gives these citizens a chance to socialize, share time, share laughter, and be creative and productive with others. MARC gives these citizens a sense of worth and dignity that is truly priceless.

That is what MARC has done for the disabled. Now let me explain what MARC has done for those of us who are not disabled. Over the past fifty years, MARC has been at the forefront of the effort to move the mentally disabled out of the shadows, and in the process, to move all of us toward a better, brighter future. The good people of MARC, have done much to remove the stigma attached to cognitive, intellectual and

developmental disabilities simply by remaining true to their motto of “seeing people, not disabilities.” Because of MARC, I have learned - as have thousands of other people in my Town - that the developmentally disabled have dreams, hopes, fears and passions not unlike my own. I am a better person for it, and my community - and I daresay my State - are better too.

This is a worthy and valuable effort that we should support with government funds as citizens of this state. Non-governmental organizations such as MARC are critical components of a statewide private – public partnership which has as its goal the empowering of persons with disabilities so that they can participate in our society and enjoy the full benefits of all that comes from the “pursuit of happiness.” We need to continue to invest in and support that private - public partnership. It is an investment - an investment that will be paid back to the citizens of this State many times over for generations to come.

For this reason, I urge this Committee to support and sustain the continued good work of MARC, Inc. by acting favorably on Raised Senate Bill No. 498. I know during my term of public service there are several votes I look back on with pride as truly having made a positive impact on the lives of people who – but for the actions of our government – would have led much different lives. I believe this is a vote that the members of this body and the members of this General Assembly will be able to look back on many years from now with similar pride and satisfaction.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today.