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Speech in Support of Raised Bill #5666 : Medicaid Waiver

Good afternoon. My name is Beth Cvejanovich and my husband John and I are here to support the passage of Bill #5666. Our son is about to leave the local school system, and all of the supportive services that go with it—life skills & job skills coaches, academic tutoring, assistive technology supports, etc. The good news, though, is he is currently succeeding as a part-time student at a local community college. He is not taking remedial courses; rather he is handling 11 full college credits, studying calculus, biology and computer aided design. And he has just been accepted to a four-year college which, God willing, he will be starting full-time in the fall.

However, our son still has no friends, does not understand how to carry on conversations with his peers (in fact, has no real interest in doing so), has to be reminded to perform the most basic grooming and hygiene functions, cannot be trusted to handle any significant amount of money, cannot drive a car and may not ever be able to do so, and needs frequent assistance with organization and planning. Even if he were to gain a college degree, it is highly doubtful that he could find and hold a job, and become economically independent.

BUT, if he could just get some help with the life and socialization skills he so sorely lacks right now, I can easily visualize him achieving his dream of working as a zoologist—in a zoo or nature preserve, paying his own bills, and living independently. Consider the sound economics of investing in someone like our son: Ignore our son's needs now and pay for it ten-fold later on, because without a program like this one, a young man with a once-promising future will likely deteriorate into isolation, unemployment and depression, and end up on the state's dime as a client of the Dept of Mental Health and Addiction Services. OR, the state could spend a few thousand dollars on him now and, in a few years, instead of burdening yet another state agency's budget, our son would be paying taxes as a fully functioning member of society.