

February 14, 2013

Honorable Legislators:

My name is Joe Duffy. I come here tonight to defend my daughter and ask for simple justice. My daughter is an intellectually disabled 28-year-old woman with other medical issues as well. I am proud of her courage. She is a valued client of HARC.

I vehemently oppose the DDS budget cuts. They could destroy programs that make up my daughter's world. It is a small world but means everything to her. The cuts disrespect all disabled citizens. My daughter's supportive employment at Cigna and her one night a week respite dances at Elmwood Community Center are at risk. With future funding for group living now abolished, she has no housing after we her parents are gone.

Emerging DDS alternatives are ambiguous, inchoate and may well prove more costly! The cuts endanger the DDS' mission itself__ "...putting the people we support first and foremost...." Annualized, these cuts by fragmenting DDS services strike me as the sad and systematic abdication of a commitment made to families like mine over long years. They make a wasteland of a vital agency with superlative staff and call it "family empowerment!"

Ladies and gentlemen, how should a parent like me feel seeing millions awarded to entities who already have millions___ while millions are taken from a defenseless population and their DDS advocates? The disabled are not deficits and did not cause the fiscal crisis. Yes, I vote for the Governor's economic plan for economy recovery___ but never by scapegoating our most vulnerable citizens! As an anguished dad, I urge you to weigh carefully the unspeakable human cost behind the OPM's dubious math.

In truth, it is my firm belief that nobody proposing to sacrifice the DDS' recently stated mission has ever cared for a disabled person. Human beings like my daughter Kate will feel the real pain and the proposed perpetuation which accompanies this unprecedented assault on the safety net. Here, I do not call those in government responsible for the DDS cuts purposefully heartless. Theirs is rather a failed vision of priority needs packing a ton of hurt for hundreds who deserve better from a democratic society.

I want my daughter and all others to enjoy "freedom from fear and freedom from want" as they live out their lives. A disabled American once promised that. His name was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt!

From my heart, I appeal to this committee to use your wise judgment, do your duty as you see it___ but please DO THE RIGHT THING in the name of basic human decency! With all respect to this committee and our Governor, I honestly believe that the DDS cuts as they stand now are morally disgraceful and a stain on a great state with a hallowed legacy of defending human rights and personal dignity. Thank you and thank God we live in a nation that values freedom of speech.

Joe Duffy, Wethersfield, Ct.