

Frank & Denise King  
252 Chappell Rd  
Lebanon, Ct. 06249

Dear Legislator:

I am testifying today as a member of Our Families Can't Wait, which is a growing organization of families committed to addressing the chronic underfunding of DDS services for our loved ones with intellectual disabilities.

My husband and I are the custodial grandparents of 3 grandchildren. They have been with us for 15 years. Matthew is 23 and special needs. He holds a job at Eastern Ct. State University in the dish room and enjoys his job very much. He is funny, outgoing and a very likeable young man. He would not be able to hold his job without a very good coaching team from Camp Horizons in South Windham, Ct. He needs someone to supervise him at work and at home. He could never live without supervision. Camp Horizons has been with him for the entire 15 years through his school and now his employment. They are his second family.

We are concerned about DDS policies and the lack of funding for supported living. These "entitlements" have been basically eliminated, as DDS is not placing people unless both caregivers die. Like any 23-year old, Matt needs to be on his own and interacting with his peers. We are retired. There is no financial ability to pay for an apartment or staffing for his care. There is no time or enough money to pay for life insurance, trust funds, or some of the other things that have been suggested. Most people are in the same situation we are in financially, even younger parents. They are just trying to keep their heads above water.

The question we have is...what kind of society do we want for us and for our children? What is government for, if not to make a place for everyone, even in bad economies? Our grandson should be graduating from college, buying a new car, and bringing girlfriends home for us to meet. Matt's situation was not because he made bad choices, but because someone else did when they shook him at 7 mo of age. We as a society need to step up for people who, through no fault of their own, are in situations like my grandson. Are we going to help people with ID/DD, or are they "throwaway people"? Sometimes the argument is made that if someone doesn't contribute to society, we shouldn't give them "crutches". People with ID/DD, at all levels, contribute very much to society. They teach us compassion and how to care for others. They teach us patience and tolerance. They teach our children diversity and inclusion.

The waiting list for residential living supports at DDS is now over 3500. My husband and I are looking at our 70's and are increasingly concerned about Matt's future. Waiting for us to die and then taking him from everything he knows to a strange place, because that's the only "bed" available, is abusive and terrifying for us and for him. Why are we keeping people with ID/DD from living their lives? Are they expected to put their lives on "hold" until both caretakers die? Is that what you would want for your loved one?

We know that funding for help in supported living can be found. It's all about priorities and political agendas. Please do the right thing and restore all funding through DDS for people who need this. Thank you.

Frank & Denise King