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February 15, 2014

Attention: APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony regarding the Governor's Budget Bill # 5030, AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015. I am testifying on behalf of Friends of Autistic People, FAP, representing many adults on the autism spectrum, as well as on behalf of my own daughter who has classic autism. Not long ago at the Family Hearing Day at the LOB we heard the terrible situation of many adults on the autism spectrum who are on the waiting list with practically no hope to get into a group home or receive other community residential services. I also testified myself about the lack of autism specific services for those few who already have places in group homes. All this is due to cut-backs in the DDS budget during the past few years.

At the same time we are all aware that the State has half a billion dollars surplus and the Governor has proposed to give half of that back to the tax payers as \$50 per person refund while the other half would go to a Rainy Day Fund. I and most members of FAP agree in putting some money away for rainy days. However, to give \$50 presents to everyone in Connecticut just makes no sense. It won't help our poor and will mean nothing to those with means. It will not add votes and not giving this money back will not cost votes either.

The obvious place to put this money is to restore the DDS budget. You might even increase it so that those thousands on the waiting list for residential services will finally get a place to live rather than waiting till their aging gray haired parents die when they become emergency cases. Adding the money to the DDS budget would mean that the staff of autism focused group homes would finally get trained in how to support our adult children with autism rather than babysitting them. Also vital autism support services such as speech therapy to learn how to communicate (and possibly avoid getting molested), OT (occupational therapy) to learn life skills such as the proper use of the bathrooms and other personal hygiene and daily life skills, vocational programs, sensory integration to allow them to function, etc could be re-introduced for those who need them.

I ask all of you on the committee, and, in fact, would like to ask the Governor also: What would you advise to do with the surplus funds if your own child were on that waiting list?

Respectfully submitted by
Brita Darany von Regensburg
President
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Friends of Autistic People is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life of the entire spectrum of individuals with autism

www.autisticadults.net