

Dear Appropriation Committee,

There are many reasons why my son Karl Arezzini should receive residential funding from DDS and remain at Chapel Haven's outstanding transition program for disabled adults. The reasons to continue a residential placement include Karl's health, safety and quality of life, as well as it being a wise investment for the state of CT.

Karl is 23 years old and has autism. He is a gifted singer and cellist. He is no stranger to politicians since he performed in an autism benefit in 2000 and in 2013 with former Attorney General and the now State Senator Blumenthal in attendance. In 2002 Karl performed for a radio performance for autism awareness with several CT congress members in attendance. He performed with the 400 member National Children's Choir in Carnegie Hall as the only disabled singer in 2000. Karl was featured in the Movie, "Lost and Found Childhood" which won a prize at the 2007 NY Tribeca Film Festival. The list of musical accomplishments goes on and on. The irony of Karl's life is that he can play Bach suites on the cello but has had enormous difficulty brushing his teeth, dressing himself, crossing the street and living an independent life. However, with the help of programs like ABILIS of Stamford/Greenwich and Chapel Haven in New Haven, Karl is closing the gap between his great music abilities and his daily living and independence skills.

Why should Karl leave a program like Chapel Haven and return home for lack of funding? He has made such strides towards independence that ABILIS made him the feature story of their annual 2013 annual report. Autism Speaks featured Karl in their July 2013 blog as a premier success story for how the right residential program can help people with autism lead an independent and productive life. Being dependent is bad for Karl and bad for the state of CT. It costs more money in the long run if Karl cannot be prepared to work and live independently.

At this time Karl's family is experiencing hardships on many fronts. Karl's father is chronically ill and was recently hospitalized. Karl has a sister with her own disabilities that demand much attention from his parents. His family home is no longer a suitable environment for him as his health, safety and general well being can not be addressed there. All the progress he made during the last two years at Chapel Haven would cease and Karl would surely regress. Instead of a person who can use his music abilities to inspire others, he will become someone who did not reach his potential. Karl would have his health, safety and well being compromised in a household struggling with hardships and eventually will become a burden on society. Please let Karl continue his life's "song of independence" and fund his residential placement at Chapel Haven. Do not compromise Karl's safety and quality of life. He is trying so hard to improve and make good on the state's investment in his education. Don't pull the rug out from under Karl now when he is giving it everything he has to become a productive member of society.

Sincerely,

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