

March 17, 2014

**PUBLIC HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE  
HB 5534**

Richard and Donna Sadler (parents and legal guardians)  
Sean Vincent Sadler  
144 Elizabeth St.  
Norwich, CT 06360-5536  
(860) 887-9427

Our son, Sean Vincent Sadler is 22 years old. He was born premature at 27 weeks at 2 pounds and 2 ½ ounces after a difficult pregnancy. Sean has been diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD on the Autism spectrum) and is mentally disabled. Sean uses a wheelchair and is unable to speak but can communicate in his own way. His inability to talk, as well as the PDD, can cause him anxiety at times. The anxiety causes some aggressive behavior issues. He is receiving medication for the behavior issues and they have lowered the aggressiveness of the behavior. Sean needs to have someone with him at all times and assistance for most of his everyday needs.

When Sean was diagnosed as mentally disabled (mentally retarded then), Sean became a client of the Department of Mental Retardation, now the Department of Developmental Services. At that time we were told that DMR (DDS) would provide necessary service for our son Sean. One of the most important services that was promised was for a residential placement when the need arose.

At home we are the sole providers of his needed care. Our greatest fear is what would happen to Sean, if something happened to us. Because we were worried about this, a long time ago we put Sean on a waiting list to be able to be placed into a group home when we needed to. At that time there was a huge wait list. We thought that we would have Sean covered for the future. Now we hear about group homes being closed, when the need is for more group homes. There are currently about 75 individuals who are waiting for an emergency placement. Currently the wait is about 6 months for an emergency placement. We have also heard that if an offer for a placement is turned down, you are not offered another one. It doesn't matter if you believe that the placement is an appropriate fit for your loved one. Each individual has different needs. How can only one option be offered? For their safety and well being, it has to be appropriate and not "take it or leave it"!

As Sean's parent and legal guardians, we have been his staunchest advocates. We have had to fight for medical treatments, insurance issues and his right to have the appropriate classroom situation. A classroom that encourages his unique abilities in a positive way. Not to fit into what the school system feels is adequate and enough. Once Sean was placed in that appropriate classroom situation with a wonderful teacher from Project Learn, Sean has gone from a frustrated, behavior ridden child into an adult who can function/socialize in a group situation, who can communicate in his own way and can be productive doing small tasks/jobs. These accomplishments are a great sense of pride and happiness for him. Through DDS funding for his current Day Program at Horizons in Windham, he can continue his feeling of self-worthiness.

Recently rumors of budget cuts effecting the day programs have been a cause of concern. Sean has worked hard to get to this stage of having a life with a purpose and meaning. For this to be taken away from him would be cruel. These types of specialized programs are not affordable for the average family. We rely on DDS's help.

During the last 2 budget sessions, the state has cut funding from DDS's budget. A budget that was already tight. Taken from individuals that desperately need the help they get. Families cannot afford the costs of this care on their own. We need help.

One such budget, I believe about 2009 – 2010 (Sean was turning 18), forced many case workers to take the retirement option in place of being laid off. Due to the lack of case workers, individuals who were not receiving SSDI, were no longer provided a case worker. The Federal Government requires that those receiving SSDI have a case worker. Those that were dropped were provided a phone number to call a DDS case worker who manned the phone to assist them. They had to pretty much fend for themselves. No caseworker to inform them of services available to them.

With the current budget being considered and with the budget surplus that Governor Malloy has been speaking of, we would like to ask that the funding that was taken from DDS in the last two budgets not only be returned, but increased beyond that amount. We would like to see: 1) more caseworkers hired as the current caseworkers are overloaded with Clients and 2) More funding to provide more resources, more group homes, housing for those with intellectual disabilities and more respite centers. Our family members have enough hurdles to overcome. Receiving a little help shouldn't be.

Please support Bill HB 5534. Many families are not only counting on it but really need it to survive!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Donna M. Sadler and Richard C. Sadler  
Sean V. Sadler