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Please Fund Transition Services for Autistic Teens and Adults

Nelson Mandela, an emblem of sacrifice and struggle for equality and citizenship, once said, "**it always seems impossible until it's done**." I recently read these words under his image at the entrance of public library building and they gave me pause. A perfect place to remind us that language is a powerful tool but you need access to it, as well as the ability to read and express yourself to use it effectively. Mandela fought for disenfranchised members of his nation. Without the funding and support they need, our young people and adults with autism, will become or remain part of a disenfranchised "nation," if we don't use our words and our collective presence to support autistic individuals transition into adulthood.

As a parent of a daughter with autism, the **impossible** is ever present. **Impossible** represents those unreachable goals. Those discarded expectations that parents foolishly impose on their children. It is **impossible** to control another person's life but it is **not** impossible to support that person on her journey.

I remember my fear that my daughter with autism would never speak. **Impossible.** Insurance still won't cover the intense speech therapy she needs because autism diagnosis; her three sounds led to continuous frustration and meltdowns. When the **impossible** happened—we connected with a generous and skilled speech therapist that worked with our daughter gratis—I was shocked and grateful. She told me, it will be work but she will learn. It is **not impossible**.

Although she's no conversationalist, she can now, at least, tell you she's hungry or that she needs the bathroom.

I remember when I thought potty training was **impossible**. But with skilled support, and lots of work, she now wears underwear; she still has accidents but it no longer seems out of reach. It no longer seems **impossible.**

However, as we all know, every person with autism is distinct and has a unique set of "impossibles;" but regardless of what these seemingly unattainable goals are, they will certainly remain **impossible** without support. Even small steps that may lead to bigger strides won't happen without financial, legal, structural, and emotional support. One person, as Nelson Mandela modeled for the world, can make a difference but by galvanizing a vocal and visible community, that one person becomes part of a collective force for progress. Mandela fought for the lives of people who were treated as second-class citizens, disposable lives. The members of our autism communities are not disposable and our collective ability to help them/us is **not impossible**. Our voices and actions can lead to improved lives and futures for autistic individuals and their communities. All along the spectrum, teens and young adults of all abilities, need your/our support to achieve the **impossible**--whether that means a safe clean loving group home, access to college courses, or the basic human dignities to which we are all entitled as citizens of this nation but also as citizens of humanity—compassion, respect, and the right (tools and support) to **pursue the impossible** and get it done.