

My name is James Gardner and I reside at 35 Wildcat Springs Dr, Madison, CT 06443.

I am writing this letter in response to the proposed budget cuts from Governor Malloy concerning DDS, HB 624.

My wife and I have a twenty one year old son with Autism named Mark. Mark is wonderful young man but unfortunately suffers with a very low IQ and limited social and verbal skills making it very difficult to communicate his feelings to others. My family has lived our entire lives with Mark hoping that he will stay calm and not lash out at us with his fists over his frustrations or mood swings. Being a father to a child with autism has been a life long journey of trying to keep my son's feelings at bay while trying to keep my other children's lives normal and maintain a healthy relationship with my wife. We rely heavily on the DDS staff that comes in to give us breaks in our day or to support us with techniques on how to cope with our son or quite simply another set of hands to subdue our son during one of his aggressive bouts. Quite honestly, if we didn't have those breaks in our routine, I am not sure we would be able to maintain caring for our son. As we have grown older and he has grown bigger and stronger, he has been able to physically take over both my wife and I with hitting us, biting us and giving us head butts. He went through a stretch of time where he was putting his head through the walls of our house and slamming his knees to the ground in frustration. He then would come after us looking to take his anger out physically on my wife and I . We were pushed at one point this past summer to call 911 and have the police and an ambulance come to our house to restrain him and take him to the emergency room, where he was submitted into a psychiatric ward for 2 weeks, This was one of the worst experiences we have ever had to go through as parents and it was the longest 2 weeks of our lives. We need the supports that DDS provides us and I am sure that there are countless families like ours that need the continued support that DDS is giving them.

My son is a great young man but needs all of the support and help he can get. My family implores the Governor and the Appropriations Committee to stop the cuts to DDS and restore full funding to DDS. I would also like to see full funding for the DDS Waiting List.

Thank you for your consideration  
James Gardner