

## Testimony for the Appropriations Committee Hearing

March 6, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Larry Gray. I live with my wife Joan and our 28 year old daughter Lauren in East Hampton, CT. Lauren has Down syndrome and is currently supported by MARC Community Resources in Middletown.

I would like to express my concerns with H.B. 6824 concerning the funding reductions to the Department of Developmental Services budget. If these cuts are implemented they will severely threaten the services our daughter receives through MARC. Lauren currently attends the MARC Employment Opportunities and Day Services program five days a week where she receives a broad range of vocational skills and employment opportunities. She works at Chili's and Holy Apostles Seminary and delivers meals for the Meals on Wheels program. She is very happy with this program because it gives her a chance to be out in the community and she feels she has a place in society just as her non-disabled family members and friends.

We are very fearful that the \$46 million in cuts to the DDS budget proposed by Governor Malloy will destroy the opportunities that individuals with disabilities have through programs funded by DDS. These programs are already working with an underfunded budget. We are overwhelmed by the possibility that our daughter might be sitting home with nothing to do because these private programs have lost their funding. The irony is that a properly funded private provider system could grow and prosper and in turn save the state millions of dollars currently being spent to sustain a very expensive state system providing the same services.

We understand that the state is facing a serious financial crisis but we urge you to restore these cuts to ensure these critical programs and services are available for one of the most vulnerable segments of our population. These programs are vital to the well-being of these individuals and you need to invest in the nonprofit sector which will improve service delivery, increase economic activity, and save taxpayer money.

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