



My name is Heidi Toala and I live in North Stonington, CT. I am writing today in response to the Governor's proposed budget cuts to DDS and I am strongly opposed. With the increasing number of families affected by the monumental challenges of raising children with special needs in hard economic times, DDS often represents one of the sole sources of hope for easing our families' burdens and helping our children to reach their highest potential.

My son Evan was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder in 2013, at the age of 2. When he aged out of the Birth-to-Three system at age 3 and into the school system, the levels of behavioral, speech and occupational therapy we began to receive has not been intensive enough. He is under serviced. We are currently applying to DDS for support to help our little boy get his best start, despite warnings of long waiting lists. Now to find out that cuts are proposed is very discouraging. In CT, we need more comprehensive supports for families and better ways to be funneled into a network that can guide us. Cuts won't help our families, our children, and our future here in CT.

I urge the Appropriations committee to stop the cuts to DDS. Restore full funding to DDS and fund the DDS waiting list. My son, Evan, and I are counting on you.

Sincerely,
Heidi Toala