

My name is Holly Buckley and I am the mother of a 17 year old young man severely impaired by autism. Harry is practically non-verbal. He weighs 200 pounds, is 5'11" and is prone to self-injury. He is my heart's delight and a profound burden. He cannot be left unattended for any amount of time. I know and accept that he will live with me all of my life.

For the past 13 years I have worked tirelessly with my school district and Harry's school teaching him the most basic skills. We continue to teach him daily living skills and search constantly for employment venues and job opportunities that might be appropriate for him. (It takes years to teach simple tasks like raking, placing clothes on hangers or rolling silverware but he can learn with patience.) Our hope has always been that Harry will be/can be a contributing member of his community someday. After thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars I find now that Harry won't have access to an adult day program and won't have an opportunity to take part in supported employment due to cuts to the DDS budget.

From a very practical standpoint this is hard for me to understand. From an emotional standpoint it is impossible to comprehend. I cannot imagine a time when Harry has no planned outlet for any hours of any day. Weekends at our house are a challenge. Week long breaks from school are truly taxing and require 1 to 1 supervision. Harry starts to lose basic daily living skills and his behavior deteriorates quickly after three or four days. The three week break at the end of each school year requires both my husband and I to be home. I dread that time every year.

We are not alone in this story. Many families experience the same difficulties. Appropriate Adult Day Programs, just that little bit of time each day with some structure and a chance at meaningful employment and recreation makes a tremendous impact on the lives of adults with intellectual disabilities and their families.

For my family I can honestly say that I can only see a dangerous and unsafe time ahead without access to Adult Services. I'm sorry if that sounds melodramatic but it's simply the truth. For people like Harry we can only occupy so much time before things really start to fall apart. What happens then? Who is responsible for the young adults and families that are now simply unable to cope and end up in the emergency room or police station? These cuts will make a difficult situation even harder for so many families.

Please, we are not looking for a hand out, we need help. Please restore full funding to the DDS Budget. Please take a keener look at the DDS Budget it has been made abundantly clear that plenty of funds already exist there that are not being used for the greater good.

Thank you for your time.

Holly Buckley (203-246-4263)

