

Dear Sen. Fonfara and distinguished committee members.

The issue of restoring \$14 million looted from the DDS by the OPM stands before you. This is a moral as well as a political moment. The easy route is to sustain the unthinking, uninformed budget cuts proposed by the OPM. Having heard their chiefs in public testimony and claiming no special expertise as my own in fiscal policy, I nonetheless tell you

in truth that I was astonished at their profound ignorance about the community of IDD and autistic persons upon whom they have inflicted great suffering. We parent-advocates and our ever growing number of allies across the state can no longer speak about the gravity of the issue you will decide except in raw candor. We believe that since 2012, the

record will show a clear pattern of budgetary bias toward our beloved sons, daughters, nieces and nephews. At \$43 million lost to the DDS, this is a public policy based on discrimination and antique notions about the needs of our children and families. This is no less an issue of equality and civil rights than any other struggle by an embattled minority.

I have said so with other parents in public testimony and public forms. The wider citizenry of our state has at last heard our pleas and you will note that we collected 10,000 signatures protesting the shameful cuts of services to our community. We many parents and friends of the historic IDD Caucus are filled with a terrible resolve that will not be

silenced. As always, we respectfully ask you to do your duty and fulfill your public trust. In this instance, the public trust can only be acquitted by your votes to rescue the families of persons with IDD and autism. None of us care to enumerate the multiple instances of late where public funds have been wantonly expended. We leave that to your skills, wisdom

and commitments as our elected leaders. We never asked for PRIORITY in the budget. We are asking for EQUALITY in the best traditions of our state's pioneering efforts in special needs funding. We are loathe to make limping analogies or pit ourselves against other rightful needs. Yet, no one of the hundreds of people I've met in the last three years

has missed the stark reality that convicted felons receive more state-funded due process than our IDD and autistic children who have made no bad life choices! Don't mistake this remark. WE STAND FIRM ON JUSTICE FOR ALL! It is that very Social Justice that you affirm if you restore the DDS's funds and re-think what has been done to the

Department for over 30 years! Let us bury for good that dead past by your courageous votes on our behalf! In your hands, distinguished lawmakers, is the choice of affording a rich and better life for the IDD community or of, yes, risking great harm that may befall them if complex needs are not addressed.

Respectfully, Joseph W. Duffy, MA, MS, CAGS.; Donna M. Duffy, R.N. B.A.