

I am writing in favor of SB 918 as I believe we should support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I am a parent of a young man with both Intellectual disability and autism. I am also a member of Our Families Can't Wait steering committee. My point is simple. These are people with significant needs and as a society I believe we should take care of people who need help to care for themselves. This includes children, elderly and folks with significant disabilities. What other charge do we have that is greater? What other need is more important than that?

The DDS system of determining need is not effective and many of us feel we reach the level of need to get support for our loved one, but the DDS system says no. The current system doesn't work. When the legislature approved extra funding last year for 100 families DDS reached out to their "emergency" list to find that half of the families did not want or need the housing support at that time. That is not to say there are not HUNDREDS of families who would have said yes, they just were not the ones that DDS's flawed system determined neediest. Who is deciding the emergency needs? Who is deciding the needs in general? We need a better system that involves the families at a greater level in determining needs, and provision of services.

Lastly, but not less importantly, the individuals who work in the group homes and supported employment programs need to earn a living wage. My son's providers are excellent, but the amount of turnover in the agency is a detriment to the program. People can't afford to live and support families on these wages and are forced to move on. Most folks with I/DD have trouble with change, and changing support staff is no different.

We need a system overhaul and we can't do it with less money. We just can't do it for less. Most of the residents in CT believe that our folks with I/DD are taken care of by the state. They see group home clients in malls and out in the community and would never guess that many families struggle with this responsibility daily. They wouldn't know because we are too exhausted to have a voice. I suspect many other citizens would stand up and support this too, if they knew the plight of many of us. In fact many did, if you see the OFCW petition. Please consider the needs of all of our families, ASK US what we want. You may be surprised by the answer, and it may not cost a whole lot more if we get it right. Supporting SB 918 is the right direction for all of us.

Thank you,

Jane Hampton-Smith

308 Pudding Hill Road

Scotland, CT 06264

860455-6185