

Public Health Committee Public Hearing Mar-3-2015 Testimony for **SB 918**  
submitted from Karen Linder, 2 Brookside Drive, Clinton CT 06413

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB 918 passage and to request increased funding in the 2016 - 2017 DDS budget.

Governor Malloy has used his rescission authority to cut \$13.9 million from DDS in the current fiscal year. The continued cuts to the DDS budget are crippling to those citizens of Connecticut with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. This is personally important to me as my 17 year old son is on the Autism Spectrum and as such is dependent on DDS's Autism Waiver program for any future supports he may need. He has been accepted and identified as eligible for services, but the wait list is over 400 people long. Cuts to DDS funding directly impact our family. I understand we face a budget deficit. But to address that statewide issue with heavily disproportionate cuts to an agency serving our most vulnerable, in the face of all that came forward at the I/DD Caucus Hearing, is grossly inappropriate and irresponsible.

The Governor's proposed budget for the next 2 years would continue these cuts, add more than \$20 million in additional cuts, and wouldn't allocate any new funding for over 2,000 people on the Waiting List or increases for caregivers/providers who have gone without increases for 7 years. It is troubling as a voter to hear that caregivers have gone without salary increases in 7 years, while Connecticut legislators received salary increases. Now I am hearing that more cuts will be added to the Governor's budget. Given Connecticut's recent track record, I am worried that DDS will again be targeted for cuts.

Viable strategies to improve fiscal spending relative to DDS have been repeatedly proposed — actions suggested which would strongly improve DDS long term expenses and provide real solutions for families and address the completely unacceptable waitlist. We need the legislature to restore the cuts and to increase funding for DDS and we also need SB 918 to pass so that a sustainable plan for the future of services for all people with intellectual and development disabilities in Connecticut are addressed. We are lucky to have solution oriented experts working with the I/DD Caucus, access to real statistics and real solutions. We now need be responsible and take corrective actions. The work is hard, but that does not mean we should continue to fund a broken system. We need to try new approaches that have been successful in other states and take firm steps in new directions. To do this we must have increased DDS budget funding and passage of SB 918.

Thank you.