

Michael and Ellen Maus

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My wife and I would like to thank our legislators, particularly our district Representative, Mr. Carney and Senator, Mr. Linares for their time and attention to this matter today.

We are the parents of a 31 year old son with a diagnosis of global developmental delays and mild cerebral palsy. Michael Jr. attends the New London County ARC day program, is non verbal and needs constant supervision to ensure his safety and well being. He does not recognize the danger of touching a hot stove or walking out into oncoming traffic. Michael does not discriminate between edible and inedible food, poisonous and safe household products and dry or icy sidewalks. He needs maximum assistance with bathing, dressing, eating and toileting. He rarely sleeps through the night and if the opportunity presents itself he will open the door and walk outside; shoes or no, winter or summer, rain or shine.

Michael is, in other words a handful; laughingly we say "a 3 yr. old in a 30 yr. old body". However, it really is no laughing matter. He is now larger and stronger than his mother making trips to public places difficult without assistance should he want to go north while mom needs to go south. But we couldn't love him more and every day we thank The Good Lord for the opportunity we have to show our love for him by taking care of his most basic needs. No, we're not saints. We are no different than many other families with special needs children and we all do what we need to in order to get through another day.

Decades ago when Michael first entered the system, then referred to as DMR, we were promised that funding that he received would be secure and once obtained would never be taken away. His needs would be taken care of and when the time came for him to leave home there would be a safe and secure housing program to make sure he would have a warm and nurturing place to live for the rest of his life. Those promises have been broken and with them the trust and confidence we have in the governmental system that so many people rely on. Michael's DSS funding recently was cut by \$200 a month; to a grand total of \$18! Eighteen dollars! Why bother? I mean really! It probably doesn't impact us financially as much as it does some families but the \$18 is an insult. They would have done better to cut the funding entirely. But that's how our current governmental system works.

The housing outlook is one of the greatest problems, though and last year the now newly retired DDS commissioner stated that as for the housing waiting list "there is nothing to wait for." This is where special needs families have really been **abandoned**. Housing, in recent memory has rarely been developed if there has not been a court order as a result of a lawsuit. We parents are getting older and

developing our own health problems and in many cases becoming unable to fully care for our special needs children. Right now there is no funding and no plan, other than “emergency placement” in the event that the parents die or become so infirm that a crisis situation develops. Then the child is taken *from the home and thrown into the first available bed, whether it’s in a nursing home or residential setting miles from any relatives and regardless of whether the other housemates are compatible with the child or not.* This is unacceptable, especially for a state like Connecticut where towns like Glastonbury and Old Lyme can receive State grants (free money to the tune of \$4 million and \$400,000 respectively) for building ***boat houses for their crew programs.*** I know, I know, we’ve heard the response from the Governor and his allies that the money comes from different places; some is bonded, some comes from this fund or that one. Baloney. The money comes into the State’s coffers and it goes out to different projects. Governor Malloy, take a good, long look at yourself in the mirror. How did you feel when you made your appearance at the Special Olympics Winter games this past weekend and mingled with the same constituents that you had just drawn and quartered and hung out to dry with your proposed massive cuts to the DDS system? Did it bother you at all? If our government really wanted to make things work it could find a way. That’s all we’re asking of you-our legislature, to find a way to help secure the future of our most vulnerable population, those that can’t take care of themselves through no fault of their own. Restore the money cut from the budget and add more to provide the proper level of services our children deserve.

Looking down the long, dark tunnel of our future lives there appears to be a faint light. We pray to God that that light is the light of hope for our children and not the light of an oncoming freight train engineered by the Governor of the State of Connecticut that will smash us all into oblivion.