

Testimony for Public Hearing on DDS Budget

By Kerri Williams

March 6, 2015



Rachel and Sashae, her home helper through DDS

I am speaking to you today as a Newtown resident and mother of a child with severe special needs (both developmental delays and autism.) Please vote against the Governor's proposed cuts to the DDS Voluntary Services Program. This program is a lifeline for our family – the only reason we are able to have our daughter living at home with us. The cost to the state would be much more significant if she had to live in a Group Home.

Rachel is 14 years old and well over 100 pounds, but her developmental age is that of a toddler. She is not toilet trained. Living with Rachel can be a roller coaster ride -- one moment getting hugs and kisses and the next pinches and scratches. She is a beautiful young lady with short, brown hair and blue eyes. I love to sing songs to her and call her “The Boo.” But before we had this program, I would often go to bed crying because of scratches and bruises inflicted by Rachel during her nightly “hygiene” routine.

Having qualified personnel in our home makes life bearable for myself, my husband, Mike, and son Nathan. Rachel is a big girl now. When she has a behavioral outburst, it takes at least two people to safely get her under control. Having our worker, Sashae, in our home means these outbursts happen less frequently, and when they do, we can manage them.

This program helps us make it through each day with Rachel – one day at a time -- deal with her behaviors and set goals for the future. Having Voluntary Services means hundreds of little things, like being able to attend an orchestra concert or track meet for our son. It means someone to help Rachel learn the simplest of tasks, like brushing her teeth or sorting silverware. But most of all it means having Rachel where she belongs, at home with her family. Please think of us, and all the other families in similar situations, when you make a decision regarding these proposed cuts.

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