

Testimony of Jennifer Carroll
Friday, March 6, 2015
Before the
Appropriations Committee
Commenting on:
Governor Malloy's Budget – Department of Developmental Services

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Jennifer Carroll and I live in Glastonbury with my husband and our four children. Our son, Jamie, is 20 years old. He is diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy and Intellectual Disabilities. Jamie is non-verbal and requires support in every aspect of his life, including bathing, toileting, dressing, eating, and going into the community. Jamie is a consumer of DDS services. He has had a case manager since he was 6 years old, and our family is tremendously grateful for and reliant upon the support Jamie receives from DDS. This support is vital now and will be more vital as he gets older, and more importantly, as we get older.

We ask that you to **restore DDS Grad Funding to the DDS Budget for FY16 and FY17**. DDS Grad Funding will serve about 300 individuals in each of the next two fiscal years at an average cost of \$40,000 per year.

The benefits of fourteen years in the DDS system for Jamie and our family are many. Each year Jamie's Case Manager works with us to conduct a level of need assessment and update his Individual Plan. Jamie's DDS Individual Plan describes his goals and dreams to include community involvement and a day program in his adult life – one that provides skill development, social opportunities and work training after public special education ends at age 21. This plan is carefully written to capture Jamie's strengths and all of his needs – very valuable information that assists DDS with planning what type of adult day program will be most appropriate and successful for Jamie.

Governor Malloy's proposed budget does not include funding for high school grads – funds that have been part of the DDS budget for as long as I can remember. We have some very serious concerns about ramifications that will occur to Jamie, to our family, to families like ours, and to the state if DDS Grad Funding is not restored into the DDS budget. Here are a few examples of problems that will arise:

- **Jamie will lose the value of training and learning from 18 years of special education.** These years have been an investment of public dollars, a variety of education and therapy experts, and countless hours working to build independence, communication, self-help and practical skills designed to prepare Jamie for a meaningful adult life with peers, activities, social opportunities and work experiences. A day service program is essential to make this all happen, and is unaffordable for our family.
- Without a day program, **Jamie will have no option but to sit at home with no peers, no social experiences and no practical skill building.**

- Without a day program, **one parent would have to stay home** with Jamie to meet his full time care needs. **The result is a loss of job and income potential** for the family and a subsequent domino effect of cutting out other important expenses such as college education for our daughters.
- The stress and pressure on families who provide around the clock care for individuals with significant disabilities will exhaust parents and caregivers both physically and mentally. **Parents will be more likely to put their children on the residential waiting list.**
- The residential waiting list will grow exponentially, and Connecticut will have to deal with more emergency placements as parents aren't able to keep up with their children's care. **Some parents will make the unfortunate decision to turn guardianship over to the state - dropping their adult children at emergency rooms.**
- **The long-term costs to Connecticut to provide both residential and day supports for individuals with intellectual disabilities will significantly outweigh** the short-term cost of restoring Grad Funding into the DDS budget.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these important concerns.

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