

My husband and I are the grandparents of a 24 year-old young man with intellectual disabilities. We have had custody of him and his 2 siblings since the ages of 9, 8, and 3. Matthew was put on the "Wait List" for residential placement at least 10 years ago by his case worker who assured us that when the time came, he would transition and be placed in a setting with peers so he could interact and live within the community as any young adult would. This has not happened. My husband will be 70 this year, and I will soon follow. Last year our grandson was offered a group-type home with 2 other young men with ID (CRS) about 2 miles from our home. His private agency (Horizons) thought he would be a perfect fit for this placement. It was truly a person-centered placement. DDS told us through the PAR and Review Process that my grandson was not eligible for the added budget money from last session because my husband missed the age "cutoff" by 5 months. Many families got the funding needed for residential placement, even though they have not, as yet, found a placement. This makes no sense.

My husband and I have, essentially, brought up 2 families to the best of our ability. We have put 2 of our own children through college and 1 granddaughter through college as well. Our resources are now limited, as we are retired. Our grandson is important to us and we want what is best for him. We know what he needs. We know that even though he does not understand the concept of living with his peers in a residential setting with the supervision he needs, he would thrive given this chance.

What is going on now in this state is immoral. We need these cuts stopped and all funding restored. Our loved ones with intellectual disabilities are being asked to bear the burden of miss-management and poor choices by the very ones entrusted to care for the weakest in our state. They are being segregated in their own homes and their civil rights violated by a state government that has walked away from their responsibilities to a population that has little control over their lives and has had no voice. We need you, our legislators, to continue to step up to the plate and make this more of the priority it needs to be. We need you to walk a day in our shoes. Only then will you understand that hedge-funds, busways, sports complexes, high-speed rail systems, and other pet projects and ideas should not be tolerated at the expense of human beings. We are coming together for the intellectually disabled community to ask you to not let this happen. Not again. Not any more.

We so much appreciate that you have given our loved ones with intellectual disabilities a voice. Please understand when we say, "your voice needs to be louder."

Horace Mann said, "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humankind."

Frank & Denise King, Lebanon, Conn.