

My name is Dr. Lisa Weisinger, I live at 3 Fawn Brook in West Hartford. I would like to thank Committee chairs Senator Beth Bye, Representative Toni Walker and the rest of the committee for reading this testimony.

I have a 21 year old son, Jamie, who has Down syndrome who will become Connecticut's next victim of the governor's budget if something drastic is not done. Jamie will graduate from his post secondary program this June. If the governor's budget continues to hammer away at the very core of DDS, there will be a waiting list for Day Services and Job Supports. All of the work he has done for the past 14 years will have been for naught. The weight of this new round of budget cuts is devastating to Jamie, my husband and me. Has Jamie spent the last 14 years learning the maze of social graces and academic achievement just so he can sit at home with his aging parents and be alone? Jamie was accepted into the National Honor Society as a junior in high school and has appeared in countless magazines and newspapers lauding his many accomplishments. No one believed me when I told them that he could read when he was 2 and he has been breaking down barriers since he was born. Some

call him the Mayor of West Hartford, we call him the ambassador!

He continues to change the world, one person at a time.

Are we going to be that kind of society that throws away its most vulnerable citizens? My son loves school and work. He is the first one out of bed each morning. However, Jamie tells me that he is sad and lonely because all of his friends have gone off to college. Can you imagine his despair when he finds out that there is nothing for him after he graduates? What would you do if Jamie were your son? How loud would you scream knowing that the state of CT has chosen to balance the budget on the back of your son? As legislators, you have the power to tell Jamie that he matters and the great state of CT values his life. Please take a stand on the moral and ethical ground of caring for our children and put the money back into DDS. Consider taking the money saved from DDS and allow our children to be served off of the waiting list. Presently, there are 2,000 people waiting for a residential placement and have been waiting for decades. The Governor's continued \$59 million cuts to DDS will almost certainly cause a new waiting list for Day Services. What will happen to those of us who

will need DDS funds to help support our young adults in their employment?

What about those parents who have to work to support their families? If there is a new waiting list for Day Supports, who will stay home with their children? The choices are an abomination to civilized society. They either choose their child and lose their job or choose their job and their child stays home all day, every day, by him/herself. Many more families will need state assistance because they are no longer able to work. It will end up costing the state more money to cut the budget in DDS.

I urge you to continue the great work that you are doing for all of us in Connecticut. We rely on you to make the socially responsible choices that govern this great state. On behalf of Jamie and my entire family, please put the money back into the DDS and support Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens by stopping the \$59 million budget cuts.

Thank You,

Lisa Weisinger, M.D.

