

February 18, 2016

Testimony of Michelle Rivelli, M.D., F.A.A.P. to the Appropriations Committee regarding reservations about H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017.

As the parent of a 21 year old young woman with autism and intellectual disability, and as a pediatrician providing care and support to numerous individuals with developmental disabilities, I have grave concerns about the proposed adjustments to the state expenditures for DDS this fiscal year.

My daughter is graduating this June and due to the previous cuts made to DDS last year, we have been told that DDS is unable to tell us when/if she will receive funding until the end of June (right when she graduates). It is unconscionable to make a family (and there are over 300 other families like us this year alone) wait until the last minute to know what support their loved one (who is unable to be left alone and requires assistance with ADL's and to structure her day) will receive and when. This system does not allow families to prepare for their own work situations and does not give the adult programs adequate time to hire and train staff. In our own situation, despite my husband and I being physicians, we have to alternate our work days to provide care for our daughter. For a young adult like my daughter and the many others who requires structure and a well-planned transition, the inability to plan is cruel and inhumane. Each cut to DDS jeopardizes her already precarious "house of cards" upon which our support system depends.

These new budget recommendations cut close to \$59 million from the DDS budget. THESE CUTS HAVE TO STOP! There is not one person I have spoken to who understands how the state of Connecticut's legislators and governor can put the basic needs of vulnerable, innocent citizens in jeopardy. This is exactly what this bill would do. You are jeopardizing the health, safety, and well-being of the developmentally disabled community—my daughter included. You are all accountable for your budget decisions and the potential for the significant detrimental impact on this community if you do not fund these essential services.

Sincerely,

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