

Siegel Testimony the Appropriations Committee

When our son Ryan was born, in Trumbull, CT almost 28 years ago, we had no idea that we would become one the millions of families living with autism and Ryan would be one of the tens of thousands served here in CT.

At that time in 1988, little was known of the disorder and the guidance and support that we so urgently needed was very hard to find. Much of it we had to learn ourselves, researching at the library, meeting with other families and struggling to find knowledgeable professionals, as the internet was in its infancy at that time.

Through much perseverance and determination, we learned a great deal about autism and became strong advocates for our son as he traversed through the public school years. Raising a child with autism is often exhausting, expensive and isolating. But we struggled on, optimistic that our hard work and sacrifices would ultimately help our son.

Today, Ryan is currently living in a CRS in Georgetown, CT and attending a vocational program- both supported by DDS and Ability Beyond. He is making great progress as he learns to become as independent as possible. And our family united in supporting Ryan as he moves through early adulthood.

As we understand Governor Malloy's planned cuts, this decreased funding would be extremely detrimental to Ryan and those similar that so desperately depend on DDS support to bring quality and meaning to their lives in addition to that quest for independence.

It is with great distress that we view Governor Malloy's current budget proposal for 2016 to 2017. We view the Governor's cuts to DDS as unfairly targeting and discriminating those with disabilities and demand that no cuts to DDS be implemented. We insist that the legislature reinstate the DDS budget for 2016- 2017 and look to other areas for budget restitution.

We continue to be strong advocates for Ryan and many other families struggling with autism. We will fight this battle on our son's behalf and for the millions of other families living with family members with autism and intellectual disabilities.

Sincerely,

Maggie Coudriet Siegel
Trumbull, CT