

Testimony – February 18, 2016

The Appropriations Committee – H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017.

Please stop all cuts to the DDS budget and to develop strategies to get people off the waiting list.

I am writing to voice my concerns about under funding for the past 20 years to DDS and the new cut to DDS, as proposed, in the Governor Malloy's new budget. This has got to stop. People like my son, Andy needs care and cuts to his programs will have an impact on his health and safety. We need you to stop these cuts!

On August 11, 1986 we received a letter informing us "that our son, Andrew was designated a class member under the CARC v. Thorne Consent Decree. As a class member our son will be entitled to additional resources and services to meet his individualized needs in a community setting".

That was when Andy moved into an apartment with 24 hour staff under the care of Oak Hill. It wasn't an easy transition as Andy wanted to come home and it took many years and two more moves to get him where he is today. Andy now lives in a beautiful residential home in Southbury, Ct., with three other young men and loves his home and he doesn't have any problems visiting me and returning to his home. Andy has multiple disabilities, cerebral palsy, cortical blindness, epilepsy and behavior disorder all of which require trained staff to help with his daily living i.e. preparing his meals, giving him his medication, bathing, personal hygiene and walking with a sighted guide in the community. He has grown in so many ways. He is healthier, has more self confidence, enjoys life more and takes more pride in himself, all because of the excellent care and programs Oak Hill has provided. Andy also attends an Oak Hill day program in Torrington. The staff in both his home and day program are dedicated individuals trained by Oak Hill to give the highest quality of care.

I can go to bed each night knowing Andy is in a safe home, well cared for and part of a community. Andy and the other young men that live in this home are all a family and go about their daily lives like we all do. In Andy's home they all work and have their various activities and have dinner together, perhaps watch a little T.V. play a game or just spend time together. I am so proud of him and the fine young man he has become.

I began this journey with Andy 51 years ago and my goals have never changed. To ensure Andy has the best quality of care and a home to keep him safe and to give him every opportunity to grow to his highest potential. At this stage in my life I should not have to be fighting another battle but I am because I have worked too hard and long for Andy's to live in a safe environment with qualified staff to care for him at home and in the community.

I am asking you to stop all the cuts the Governor has proposed and instead to increase funding, get individuals off the waiting list, increase residential opportunities, job opportunities, and day programs. You can make a difference and we are counting on you to help our children.

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