

To: Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

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Good Morning!

My name is Donna Sadler. I am a Steering Committee member of “Our Families Can't Wait” organization and I also with the People Matter Coalition. But mostly I am here advocating as a mother of a son who is both Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled. First let me say thank you to the Finance Committee for letting me testify here today on House Bill #5046, An Act Concerning Revenue Items to Implement the Governor's Budget.

There has been a lot of talk about what you, the Legislature, should not do this year. I'm here today to talk about what you should do – what you CAN do – to help people like me.

This revenue proposal does not raise the funds our state, our families and our communities need.

This revenue proposal does not respond to the new Connecticut economy, where the super-wealthy are getting even more wealthy while our middle-class jobs have been turned into low-wage work. So it should be no surprise that our state revenues are out-of-balance if the richest 1-percent are allowed to pay only 5.3 percent in state and local taxes, while the rest of us pay an average of 9.9 percent in taxes. (According to the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP) and the Economic Policy Institute (EPI)).

Now is the time to be raising income taxes on those people at the very, very top. That will help people in the middle or at the bottom – people like me and my son Sean.

This is my 24 year old son Sean. He was born 3 months premature, resulting in him having Cerebral Palsy and other developmental problems. Sean is unable to speak and uses grunts and gestures to communicate as well as with pictures. CP has also confined him to a wheelchair to move around. Sean needs assistance in every part of his life. Sean cannot understand when things are dangerous and cannot tell us if he is in pain. When he feels anxious or afraid, his fight instinct takes over and he will grab, bite, and hit others. Sean feels the safest when he has a routine and plenty of activities to do. Being bored can cause his behaviors to to escalate. The person who aids him needs to be well trained on how to deal with those types of behaviors.

But Sean and my family are facing more cuts all because the tax structure hasn't kept up with today's new economic inequality. I'm here today on behalf of the thousands of families who can't be to urge you to support tax increases on the very wealthy so we can avoid cuts to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Our I/DD Community has already sustained a number of disproportionate high cuts in the past few budgets. Besides still having over 2,000 people waiting for residential services, we are now seeing people being placed on waiting lists for respite and day programs!

The current Budget Proposal will only make it worse. How can anyone contemplate more cuts with that being the case? If the next set of cuts happen, services could be taken away from those who have them. What will happen to those individuals? Go home and sit and vegetate after they have worked so hard to get where they are? What will happen to those parents who have to quit their jobs because there is no one to care for their loved one? How will that family survive? How will that help the state's budget when more people are out of work? How will that help those family members and their caregivers in Day Programs if they lose their jobs as a result of the budget cuts?

Tough Budget years are no excuse to continue to slash funding needed for DDS services and support! **DDS NEEDS TO BE FULLY FUNDED.** For individuals with I/DD, these priorities are services that sustain their quality of life and not just some bleak existence.

If we can't balance the budget without cutting critical services, hurting families, or laying off public service workers, then there needs to be a more fair revenue system. A system where everyone, including the very rich of the state, need to pay their fair share of taxes.

Thank you!