

Public Health Testimony

March 7, 2017

Senate Bill 246

My name is Adrienne Benjamin, and I live in New Britain with my husband and almost 21 year old daughter who has severe intellectual disabilities. I also serve as the Chair of the Governor's Council on Developmental Services, however this testimony is mine and not from the Council.

Thank you to Chairs Senators Gerratana and Somers, and Representative Steinberg and Vice Chair Senator Kennedy for the opportunity to speak about Senate Bill 246. Thank you to Senators Osten and Fasano for introducing this bill.

This bill, know as the "Waiting List" bill will go a long way to bring clarity and transparency to one of the biggest difficulties facing DDS.

For over 20 years there have been too many underserved people who have been on what has been called a "waiting list". But, the reality is that this list has had no actual meaning in their lives. I know you are all very aware of this longstanding problem. You've spoken with families and heard their painful stories of "Waiting" with no sense of if or when there will ever be the residential supports that they need.

Senate Bill 246 requires that at each families' yearly meeting, more information will be gathered to determine which families are in immediate need of residential services, and will project what services will be needed for other families in the future.

In addition, the survey will be organized geographically which will provide essential information will help DDS establish resources where they are needed. Most importantly, quantifying the types of services needed will give solid information to the legislature about necessary budget decisions. When it comes to resources for the I/DD population, one size does not fit all. Our family members need a wide array of services, so being able to obtain a clear idea of the type of supports needed will be a huge help.

The good news is that the process described in Senate Bill 246 is now underway. The leadership of DDS and family advocates have been working together to create this comprehensive approach, and it launched 7 days ago.

Perhaps you're wondering why legislation is needed to implement something that has already been started? Considering the long terrible legacy of useless waiting lists, including a time several years ago when it was said that there were, no waiting lists anymore, indicates a real need to codify this. Senate Bill 246 will guarantee a much improved survey of residential needs which legislators can count on to guide your decisions about resources for our DDS families.

Thank you, Adrienne Benjamin