

Public Health Committee Testimony on Bill No. SB 246
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Good morning Senator Gerratana, Senator Somers, Representative Steinberg, and members of the Public Health Committee. **I am here today to support SB 246.**

My husband and I have two young adult sons with autism and intellectual disabilities. I have been advocating for their needs here at the Legislative Office Building for quite a while now, and every year we talk about the DDS Residential Waiting List. And we all know that it's about 2,000 people, and that it's not moving very quickly.

But an underlying problem is that isn't accurate. Our organization, Families First, speaks to lots and lots of families, and the Waiting List comes up frequently. Many families can tell you, "My son is a Priority 1," (or whatever) and knows exactly how long they've been on the list. But we also have met families who did not know that there is a waiting list to be on. Some have heard of the list but didn't know how to get their child on it. Some families have never been asked what their wishes are for where their child should live. We met families whose case managers told them not to apply to be put on the Residential Waiting List, because "it wasn't worth it." We also know that some families wanted one thing at one time, and later it changed.

What this bill would do is create a simple procedural addition to the annual Individual Plan (IP) process that DDS case managers already go through with most DDS individuals and their families. Specific questions about what families want for their loved ones (whether it be a group home, in-home supports, or some other living arrangement) can be asked, as well as the timing of that need. And, every year, in the annual IP, that conversation will happen again, so any changes that have happened in the household will be recorded and the waiting list request will be updated accordingly. And then we will know, better than we do today, exactly **who** needs **what**, **when**.

The cost of doing this is virtually zero. There is no added staffing or bureaucracy. The benefit of this is to have accurate, consistently captured, and constantly updated information – on a rolling basis as each annual IP meeting occurs – so we will always have a handle on the needs of the population.

Will this solve the Residential Waiting List problem? Absolutely not! The root cause of that problem is a lack of funding, and we need to always keep our eyes on that ball. But you can't solve a problem you haven't measured. And this bill will give us the information we need to understand the problem better.