

To the Public Health Committee.

My husband and I are the custodial grandparents of Matthew, a young man with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are one of many families concerned with the cuts that have affected the way the Department of Developmental Services can help families.

We are testifying in favor of several bills that are being presented to the Public Health Committee. The first bill we are in favor of is SB 246. This bill will help both legislators and DDS in planning for the future, as it ensures that DDS gets accurate and up-to-date information on family needs regarding the Residential Waiting List and other services. This will be done through a yearly census conducted when families meet with DDS for their annual review. It has no added cost and is vital in providing information to both the legislature and to DDS. It is an important building block in being able to plan for the future. This is the piece of legislation that was left out of our bill that was passed last session and became Public Act 16-60.

We are also in favor of SB 244, An Act Concerning Improving Services for Persons with Developmental Disabilities. This bill does not have specific language as yet, but would formalize the ID Partnership, which has been formed to shape the future of DDS, as stated in the final version of the DDS Five-Year Plan released in Feb. 2017. This bill ensures diverse family representation of the full types and levels of need of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It will require advance notice of meetings, agendas, minutes and reports of the ID Partnership. Opportunities for public participation would also be provided, thus ensuring transparency and an equal voice for interested parties. This bill is presented conceptually and legislators will work to put the concepts into full statutory language following the public hearing.

Finally, we are testifying in favor of HB 5808. An Act Streamlining Filings Across State Agencies of Families Receiving Services From the Department of Developmental Services. Each year families receiving services from DDS must file a redetermination form (Form W-1ER) with the Department of Social Services. This causes a great deal of stress because filling out this 8-page form every year is confusing, redundant, and difficult, and many times families are then notified that their services will be terminated because the forms were not filled out correctly, even though our loved ones' disabilities do not change or go away. This is a State form and is not required by the Federal Government. We want to substitute a short form to simplify the annual filing.

Thank you for hearing our concerns.

Fran & Denise King, Lebanon, Conn.