Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Formica, Representative Lavielle and members of the Appropriation Committee. I am Dawn DeMatteo, parent advocate with CT DDS Families First and a Parent of a 26-year old severely disabled young adult (Anthony) receiving services from DDS. Anthony requires 24/7 care and most of the time one to one care. He is diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy, Anxiety Disorder, Dysphagia, Incontinent Bowel and Bladder, Intellectual Disabilities (non-vocal), Severe Scoliosis, along with Epilepsy. Quite a list for such a beautiful, young man.

I have been advocating for my Son and those with I/DD for several years now and am in full support of Senator Lamont’s budget providing desperately needed funding for this population. While the State is in a $4 billion-dollar deficit, it would be easy to pull funds from this population to help balance the budget. We urge those in Hartford not to attack these residents.

My Son currently receives day and residential funding. Prior to obtaining residential funding three years ago, our lives were full of misery and fright not knowing what the future would hold. It took a complete toll on both myself and his younger brother. It was years of advocating and fighting for help from DDS for our family due to the continuing budget cuts. The funding rescued our family. I didn’t realize the extent it had affected my younger Son (now 17) who recently wrote his College Essay about his life with his ‘Older, Younger Brother – Then and Now’.

I want to personally thank those here in Hartford who have listened over the past years, shown compassion, and have taken the time to understand the needs of these individuals. As a parent and advocate for others, we applaud you.

Please continue to hear our voices for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Dawn DeMatteo

East Haven,