Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. My name is James Piccione, and I have been caring for individuals with developmental disabilities for over 30 years. I would like to continue to care for these individuals, but I cannot continue to do that if we continue to cut the services that are being provided. It is important to have a robust system across the board that provides services for these individuals. We have seen budget cuts in the past and this has had a tremendous impact on the individuals and the programs we support. I am here today to ask you not to cut funding for the services I provide.

The past cuts have had a devastating effect on the lives of the individuals we provide care for and we have had to do more with less. We used to have a recreation budget. That is gone. We had access to an agency swimming pool. That is now gone. I have seen many changes during my many years of providing care and it has become more difficult for individuals and families to receive services. The “Waiting List” for services has not decreased in my entire working life, in fact, I know it has increased.

It is our moral obligation to provide care for these people. It is one of the things that make this a great state to live in. Unfortunately, we have had sharp decreases in the amount of residential services that we provide. This means that the residents of Connecticut will have less choices, and with less choices we cannot decrease the Waiting List. With less choices, families that desperately need care are left to fend for themselves.

I ask this Committee to increase funding for our residential services, and fund the IFSVIHS programs. These programs provide vital services within the individual’s homes. Not only that, but already trained state workers could be utilized to provide these services. Increasing funding for our respite services would also allow families a break from providing care for their loved one, a break that is necessary for families in the State of Connecticut. Thank you for your time.