Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. My name is John Allen. I work in Individual Family Supports for the Department of Developmental Services. I am here to ask for the continued expansion of IFS services. Public sector IFS workers are very important as we can be of immediate assistance in identifying and dealing with problems until other services or more permanent solutions, public or private, can be found. There are thousands of individuals with intellectual disabilities living at home. Assisting families in their homes provide much needed and welcome help.

Individual Family Support workers are sometimes the first to visit the homes of the individual in need, particularly for newly identified individuals with intellectual disabilities. We find out about them from the DDS helpline, other agencies or professional care providers. Being the first people into the homes we sometimes find there is a much greater need for help than we anticipated. These initial visits are vital to the agency’s ability to identify and address the needs of the population we serve. We have been and currently are in homes where the parent has a terminal illness and has difficulty providing routine care such as toileting and bathing or they can no longer manage their child with challenging behavior. In homes where the parent has gone into long term care or died, we have assisted the intellectually disabled individual who requires assistance to live on their own.

We help many elderly parents whose intellectually disabled children living at home are senior citizens themselves. We have helped in homes with parents as old as 101 years old. Sometimes the person with intellectual disabilities that we are assisting has taken on the role of caregiver themselves for their elderly parent.

We also deal with crisis situations. We have accompanied individuals from abusive or neglectful situations to places of safety where they can get the care and help they need. We are truly jack of all trades, as the needs of the individuals and families vary greatly. We provide in home and community respite, assistance with medical appointments, assistance acquiring benefits, housing and numerous other jobs.

In recent years the emphasis has been on providing help in the home rather than placement in institutions. Continued expansion of IFS services would provide valuable help to families in their home and may delay or negate the need for placement which is extremely expensive for the state.

Thank you for your time.