My name is Dr. Lisa Weisinger, I live at 3 Fawn Brook in West Hartford. I would like to thank the Appropriations Committee for reading my testimony.

My husband and I have a 24 year old son with Down syndrome who lives with us. Jamie is a recipient of DDS funds for Day and Employment Services. We rely on this budget to supply him with a job coach. Jamie has 3 different jobs 5 days a week. He relies on these jobs to give him a sense of purpose, interact within the community and provide him with a salary. He is completely capable of working and loves to work.

The DDS funds he receives allows him the opportunity to be part of the community, maintain a job, earn a living, pay taxes, and spend his money in the community in which he lives. Jamie adores going out to dinner with his friends. He uses his paychecks to pay for dinner and a show at the Bushnell.

I would like to thank the legislature for funding a pay increase for our direct care workers. DDS is in a position to make significant changes in the lives of families waiting for emergency placement, family members languishing in emergency rooms because there is no placement for them and families in crisis. DDS has instituted new Step Up-Step Down units for our family members coming from the emergency rooms and Mobile Crisis Units which help to keep families together with supports. I am so appreciative to those legislators who see the value of supporting the DDS budget without further cuts. Given the opportunity, our children can flourish in the community and give back in many different ways.

The governor’s budget for DDS this year is a far cry from previous years. Governor Lamont sees the importance of giving our children the chance to be a full fledged member of society. I ask that you consider using the governor’s budget for DDS for your legislative budget this year. It is an inclusive budget that serves our families. To date, there are over 100 people waiting for DDS Day and Employment Services, close to 60 people waiting for emergency residential placement and over 800 people waiting for urgent residential placements.

Please consider:
No cuts to current DDS services
Full funding for new graduates for Day and Employment Services
Funding for Enhances Crisis Intervention and behavioral supports
Funding for new supportive housing (let’s get creative!)

Jamie’s budget has allowed him to integrate with his fellow non-disabled peers and gives him great joy. I appreciate how hard you work on behalf of all citizens of CT and hope that you will consider Jamie’s future when you discuss the DDS budget.

Thank You