

Testimony - February 21, 2020

I am asking you to stop all the cuts the Governor has proposed and instead to increase funding, get individuals off the waiting list, increase residential homes, job opportunities, and day programs. You can make a difference and we are counting on you to help our children.

I want to tell you first-hand what cuts to the DDS budget can do to an individual. I have seen my son, Andy go from a happy, healthy man to a man that is broken. He lost his home, day program, job and friends and staff that were in his life for over 18 years.

Andy was with Oak Hill/CIB since 1986, Andy's group home was closed on August 1st of 2017 due to under funding for nonprofits and he and his three roommates had to be moved to other homes. I was given little to no guidance in finding a new home for Andy. When I went to visit a home for Andy there was another individual there on the same day looking for a bed and I felt I needed to make a decision to secure a place for him to live. This home turned out to be not a good placement for Andy as he was afraid of another individual living there. "I am so scared, mom, sometimes I wake up and don't know where I am". I have never seen Andy cry this much he keeps telling me he misses his dad who died 13 years ago this is the kind of mourning he is experiencing. I never thought Andy would be put in such turmoil. He told me "I feel like such a failure, mom". He isn't a failure we have failed him. It has broken his spirit and mine too. Moving him and the other three gentlemen has disrupted their lives and that of the staff that were caring for them. These are real people and this was their family and their home for 18 years. I moved Andy to another home in December of 2018 and this too was not a good fit for Andy and his behavior escalated causing him to injure himself and require him to be admitted to the Institute of Living where he stayed for seven weeks until we could find a place for him to live. s. When he left the Institute, he was over medicated and on 21 milligrams of valium a day. His speech was very blurred and he was having difficulty sitting up straight. He keeps telling me I am trying mom but I miss my friends they were like my brothers. These 4 gentlemen have not seen each other for over a two and half years. Funding for individuals like Andy should never be on the table to be cut. I had a meeting with the Commissioner "I need you to help save my son, Andy's life", with his help, Andy is now in a state group home. His adjustment is very slow and and he still experiencing confusion and having outburst. Because of all these moves Andy is now seeing new doctors that don't really know him but are trying to help him and adjusting his medications. All the progress Andy made over the years is gone and his regression is very noticeable. I don't know if he will ever feel secure again. With more cuts to programs what does the future hold for individuals like Andy and for parents like myself who have worked long and hard to help plan for our children's future when we are no longer able to fight for them.

I began this journey with Andy 54 years ago and my goals have never changed. To ensure Andy has the best quality of care and a home to keep him safe and to give him every opportunity to grow to his highest potential. At this stage in my life I should not have to be fighting another battle but I am because I have worked too hard and long for Andy's group home and day programs.

As legislators you can make decisions that can help people live lives to their highest potential. Andy's home and day program were a success, I can't believe what has happen to all the hard work Andy and I have put into making his life better.

This testimony was written when Governor Malloy was in office just to let you see we haven't made any progress we are still fighting the same battles.

I am writing to voice my concerns about under funding for the past 20 years to DDS and the new cut to DDS, as proposed, in the Governor Malloy's new budget. This has got to stop. People like my son, Andy needs care and cuts to his programs will have an impact on his health and safety. We need you to stop these cuts!

On August 11, 1986 we received a letter informing us "that our son, Andrew was designated a class member under the CARC v. Thorne Consent Decree. As a class member our son will be entitled to additional resources and services to meet his individualized needs in a community setting".

That was when Andy moved into an apartment with 24-hour staff under the care of Oak Hill. It wasn't an easy transition as Andy wanted to come home and it took many years and two more moves to get him where he is today. Andy now lives in a beautiful residential home in Southbury, Ct., with three other young men and loves his home and he doesn't have any problems visiting me and returning to his home. Andy has multiple disabilities, cerebral palsy, cortical blindness, epilepsy and behavior disorder all of which require trained staff to help with his daily living i.e. preparing his meals, giving him his medication, bathing, personal hygiene and walking as a sighted guide in the community. He has grown in so many ways. He is healthier, has more self-confidence, enjoys life more and takes more pride in himself, all because of the excellent care and programs Oak Hill has provided. Andy also attends an Oak Hill day program in Torrington. The staff in both his home and day program are dedicated individuals trained by Oak Hill to give the highest quality of care.

I can go to bed each night knowing Andy is in a safe home, well cared for and part of a community. Andy and the other young men that live in this home are all a family and go about their daily lives like we all do. In Andy's home they all work and have their various activities and have dinner together, perhaps watch a little T.V. play a game or just spend time together. This is my son's family and he deserves nothing but the best because he is precious and didn't choose his disabilities but, he has chosen to make the best of what he has. I am so proud of him and the fine young man he has become.

I began this journey with Andy 51 years ago and my goals have never changed. To ensure Andy has the best quality of care and a home to keep him safe and to give him every opportunity to grow to his highest potential. At this stage in my life I should not have to be fighting another battle but I am because I have worked too hard and long for Andy's group home and day programs

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