

Good Evening Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee, my name is Candice Carlson , and I have been employed by DDS as a caseworker in the Individual Home Supports Program for over 26yrs.

I am testifying and advocating today on behalf of our voiceless Individuals statewide that do not have the ability and/or the means to advocate for themselves. I also advocate directly for the hundreds of individuals who are being discarded and devalued with the elimination of their public DDS/IHS programs state wide.

First, I'd like to speak to the need of increased supports for our most needy throughout the state. DDS and DMHAS are consistently underfunded and understaffed. When the governor tasks his commissioners to find savings or efficiencies, it should not be at the expense of the individuals or the programs that they rely on for their services. Unfortunately that is what appears to be happening, a systematic pattern of neglecting to provide staffing and quality resources have created an outrageous imbalance of care. 1199 members are mandated to stay at work over and over again and frequently work below the already unsafe minimum staffing levels. This creates grossly distorted overtime level and an unequal distribution of services state wide.

This is not only concerning as a caseworker, this is concerning as a Connecticut Taxpayer and simply as a woman with a moral compass. Our CT residents who have Intellectual Disabilities, physical disabilities and mental illnesses and their families deserve better. This insatiable cycle has to change and each one of you can help.

Second, I'd like to speak to the Public / Private Partnership as this is not a one size fits all model and should be approached respectfully and should always be person centered. Meaning that something that should be chosen by the individual if wanted and never forced on these families.

The Public IHS / DDS Program is a community based federally funded program supporting individuals that are choosing to live the most independent lifestyle within our communities. Their services are essential in order for them to continue to maintain living independently within our communities safely. This program is an essential resource which is budget friendly, since it is federally funded. With thousands of individuals on the list for services in CT this program should be growing, not ceasing operations.

Closing the public IHS Program will disrupt hundreds of individuals and essentially force them to receive services from a private provider or receive no services at all. It will also sever the relationships that the majority of these individuals have had with their

caseworkers of upwards of 20-30 or more years. Ceasing Operations & Eliminating these relationships is life altering and devastating to say the least.

I respectfully ask this committee to support and fund our CT State agencies that are designed to help our most needy state wide. Agencies also must be held accountable for their actions to ensure that the quality of care and level of needs are being met with the appropriate amount of resources.

Thank you for all that you do and thank you for your consideration