



SEIUHealthcare®
United for Quality Care

March 2, 2021
Andrea Flammia
Family Support Worker, DDS
District 1199NE

Before the Appropriations Committee

Good Afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker and members of the Committee. My name is Andrea Flammia and I am a Family Support Worker with DDS. I am here today to ask that you fund respite services within the Department of Developmental Services.

For the past 30 years I have witnessed families - in stressful times and in normal times - needs for services through respite. For the individuals we serve in DDS, respite has been a saving grace. It allows our individuals to grow in independence, make friends and feel what it is like to experience time with a peer group when they actually usually may experience isolation from those that are in their peer group. It also allows their families to know their individual is in a safe place with staff that are specifically trained to ensure a time of both fun and learning. Families get to alleviate the stress of being caregivers 24 hours a day 7 days a week. In some instances this is very needed because families are caregiving for those who have challenging behaviors and in turn a high demand for attention and care. I have seen respite at times give the family unit the break they need so they can carry on with healthy caregiving while maintaining a healthy family. Respite can be the difference between an individual being able to live at home or having to be placed at a professional facility due to caregiver exhaustion.

When COVID 19 caused a lapse in many services families communicated their desperation for a break and I was asked frequently when relief would be in sight. I also get feedback from many individuals in DDS services that would like to have a break from their family in order to spread their wings and fly with new friends and new experiences.

In my opinion Expanding respite would help serve our Ct families that have loved ones with disabilities; in some cases it would lessen the need for placements that are not only heartbreaking for our families and our individuals, but also costly for our state. I believe morally, ethically and financially we would benefit greatly as a state if we invested in our people with disabilities and their families by expanding respite services. Over the long haul this would protect the cohesiveness of family units of people with disabilities and help our state find a way to focus on not only our individuals care, but to also expand to attending to the needs of family care as a whole.

Respite is an intricate part of overall Family care that benefits our individuals. Healthy families make Healthy communities and our people with Disabilities deserve that. Thanks for your time.