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I'm Nicole LeBlanc, Advocacy Coordinator for Green Mountain Self-Advocates, a peer network with more than 700 members, people with developmental disabilities.

We are here to say that the Governor's budget for developmental services is needed. Increasing Caseload dollars for FY2015 for Developmental Services is needed to meet real needs. DAIL Commissioner Susan Wehry reported that for FY 2013, the number of people facing a crisis and meeting a funding priority for Developmental Services had more than doubled.

Let me give you 2 brief examples. I serve on DAIL's Equity Committee and each month we review 30 to 50 proposals from people who need new services. The Equity Committee advises DAIL on what may work for services for these folks.

Recently a 59 year old with an intellectual disability and hearing difficulties applied for services. The person has been living with their family their whole life. Now they were wandering off. The person's medical needs have increased and they are refusing to go to the doctor. The family can't do it anymore.

Another example is a 20 year old with autism whose family can't handle the person's aggressive behavior towards a sibling. The family needs support to teach the person how to regulate their emotions.

The final example is person who needs to move to be safe. The person has intense behavioral issues and boundary issues. The family has a history of violence and abuse.

As you can see people applying to get developmental services have significant needs. The general opinion and testimony of providers is that the people that are serving today have more significant health and safety needs than the people that we were serving 10 years ago.

We must not rollback as a state on the promise that was made 20 years ago when Brandon Training School closed, that we would support people with developmental disabilities and their families in the community. A budget is a document of values and it is government's obligation that we protect our most vulnerable citizens and Put People first.

The Governor's proposed budget also includes a very much needed 2% Medicaid bump. In FY2014 it was used to increase wages for direct support providers. This is very important because the vast majority of support staff do not make a livable wage.

Thank You for listening