

## **Max Barrows from Green Mountain Self-Advocates**

### **2.4.15 Testimony to House Human Services**

I am Max Barrows. I live in Worcester Vermont. I work for Green Mountain Self-Advocates. I receive Developmental Services.

When I was younger I didn't want help. I was afraid where that would land me. I wanted to do things the same as everyone else when it came to learning.

I would falsely tell my teachers that I didn't miss anything. I didn't want people to think there was something mentally wrong with me. But as time went on I wanted to succeed so I started telling my teachers I want to learn what you are teaching me but I can't learn the way you are teaching me.

My brain takes time to process information. There is a shield that develops around my head that doesn't let too much get in. My brain can only take so much info and process it. So don't try to shove too many words in my head when they don't fit. It just bounces off the shield and onto the floor.

For me and most other people with disabilities it is important to have a job. During high school I worked in restaurants, in dish pits. The pay was okay but I needed a change.

I joined a self-advocacy group. When I got involved, I realized I was not alone while facing tough times. It made me feel proud of who I am. Self-Advocates say, "I don't care how different I am. I like it that way."

I was offered a professional job in the advocacy world. Once I took it, I realized I needed job support. I live with my family. They give a huge chunk of their lives to me but they can't do it 24/7. My parents both work. They already are saving the state money by supporting me in every other way. It felt unfair to ask them to do more. When I graduated from high school, I applied for and got Developmental Services. I use my services for support to work.

In closing I want to comment on next year's budget. We very much appreciate that the governor's budget includes an increase for new applicants for developmental services. However, we are concerned that at the same time, the governor's budget has \$1.9 million in cuts for people with disabilities who are currently receiving services. Developmental Services have been cut 6 times since 2009. Once again the state is reducing services from a person who has them to give to someone else who is in crisis or graduating from high school. It is like robbing Peter to pay Paul. We should change our priorities so that all people get the services they need to live with dignity, respect, and independence.

Thank you for listening to my testimony.