

Rachel MacMartin from the VT Developmental Disabilities Council
2.4.15 Testimony to House Human Services

My name is Rachel MacMartin from Montpelier. I am a member of the VT Developmental Disabilities Council. I get services from Washington County Mental Health Services. I have a job and am a gainfully employed Vermonter.

This is because I get services from WCMHS. I get to be pretty much self-sufficient because of a few hours of time from two staff people. I am exploring new avenues and learning things I highly doubt I would get to see or experience otherwise.

There are plenty more like me. There are plenty of others who want to get and are capable of having a job. People who can start being contributing members of society. They are yearning to be set free, but can't because the budget is too overstretched. What to you is just a couple of percentage points, is to us a missed chance to have a better future.

We are glad the Governor's Budget for 2016 includes a 2.5% increase in Medicaid rates. This will give support staff a cost of living increase. This is needed because they don't make a livable wage. As a result, we have a high turnover rate for support staff working with people with disabilities. Paying decent wages for support workers is important because it will go a long way to reduce staff turnover. That includes my support staff. When my staff change all the time, it is hard because I could have a good working relationship with them.

Like Max I am concerned about proposed cuts to Developmental Services. The proposed \$1.9 million in cuts for people who are already receiving

services does not include any instructions on how these cuts will be made. We are concerned that this will lead to treating people with disabilities as though they are simply line items in a budget, rather than as human beings who deserve to live with dignity, respect and independence.

I will close with what has become my touch phrase in cases like these. We could be your daughter or son, niece or nephew, or your godchild. So please, think before you cut.

Thank you for making time for me to testify this morning.