



Green Mountain Self-Advocates

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April 7, 2015

Senate Appropriations Committee

H. 490 - An act relating to making appropriations for the support of government

My name is Nicole LeBlanc. I work for Green Mountain Self-Advocates and I am here to talk about Developmental Services.

If Lori were here today she would tell you, "I live in St. Albans with my 2 children. I get Developmental Services. I have 2 jobs and I have had them since 2004. I own my own double wide trailer. I ended up getting it after being homeless when my landlord sold the building where I was living and made everyone leave. I struggled for 2 years with breast and cervical cancer. During this whole time the agency helped me with my 2 kids who are very challenging. We were experiencing domestic violence and it was very emotional. Services need to be there for people like me. I was in crisis 24/7. If it wasn't me, it was my kids. Services helped me through it all and to this day. I had a worker that went through my surgery with me and I didn't have family for support! If you take away my services I could end up homeless again. And I have been homeless too many times."

If Amanda were here she would tell you "I feel like I connect with people at the agency. They make me feel better. I feel safe. The reason I mention this is because I struggle with depression and anxiety. I have had many surgeries, on my hip, eyes, head, my jaw and staff have helped me build confidence to deal with all of this. I need their help when going to the doctors, to take my medication and to take care of myself. My mother has Alzheimer's and can't help me with these things. I cannot have my services cut."

The more than 600 members with developmental disabilities of Green Mountain Self-Advocates are pleased that the governor's budget includes an increase for **new** services for people with developmental disabilities. Less than 30% of people eligible for developmental services get any. The new money is needed for people coming into the system that are in crisis and need new services.

However, we are concerned because the governor's budget also has \$1.9 million in cuts for people who are currently receiving services. For people already in the system, services have been cut 6 times since 2009. This is the time to stand up for what is right and that is no more budget cuts. With more money for new people we are encouraged but that money cannot be taken from people receiving services. That will only put me and my friends at risk of losing the very supports and services we need to survive.

Two final suggestions. Please if there is money leftover in Developmental Services in FY 2015 we ask that you use it to cover the 1.9 million dollar budget cut in the Governor's FY2016 budget. Also we support the establishment of a waiting list if there is insufficient caseload for Developmental Services in FY2016.

Thank you for listening to our testimony.