

From: Sheila Pinkney [sheilampinkney@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2018 2:35 PM
To: Theresa Utton; Rebecca Buck
Subject: Testimonial against state budget cut to DS

Hello,

I am the parent & guardian of a 20 year old young man with Autism and Intellectual Disability.

Diagnosed at age 3 with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, we were fortunate to have a relatively early intervention. Since that time, we have had teams of people helping my son to achieve as much independence as possible.

Our team transitioned in June of 2017, from members of the school community, to Families First employees. When my son graduated from high school, we left behind a structured program and entered a world much more difficult to navigate--The Real World (TRW).

TRW doesn't bend, flex, or accomodate people with differences very well. TRW is well intentioned but not very skilled, for example, at incorporating people with disabilities and accepting said people. While my son loves to work and loves to be productive, finding a job that suits him is no easy task. It requires a job coach, employment skills development, practice, practice, practice, and lots of work on soft job skills.

I see my son as lucky--he does not have mobility issues, does not have behavioral challenges, and does not have verbal challenges. I believe my son will find a job, through the support of his case manager, and his support staff at Families First.

His intellectual disability makes achieving independence very difficult; not impossible by any means. His teams have done great work to improve his skills.

If the time comes for budget cuts to DS services, it would be impossible to cut the budgets of people less "lucky", those less able--people who need 24/7 care. People who do have mobility, behavioral, and verbal challenges--our most fragile citizens--have budgets that must be protected, and they will be. To do so otherwise would be to do harm.

Instead, people who have some level of ability--my son--will see their supports shrink. My son's services will be the real target. His ability to progress to a greater level of independence--well, that will be cut as well. I work full time, supporting our community in many ways. It would be impossible for me to stop working in order to bridge a gap created by a cut to my son's budget.

My son's goals include having a job, having friends, having his own place with a friend or roommate. My fear? That his budget will be cut before he is able to take steps toward these

goals; that the skills won't be taught to him, that when I am no longer on the planet, he will be at significant risk.

We must protect our citizens. To reduce the DS budget is reprehensible. I urge you to protect the fragile citizens who are served by DS, and forego any budget cuts to DS.

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